PUTTING ON THE ARMOR OF GOD: DEFENSIVE READING IN ENGLAND, c. 1250-1500

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Ephesians 6:11 calls upon readers to, '[p]ut you on the armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil.' This dissertation puts this verse at the center of devotional practice in thirteenth- to fifteenth-century England by showing that books and stories were often perceived as that very armor. Just as St Boniface reportedly held up a scriptural manuscript at his moment of martyrdom to protect himself from the sword, medieval readers saw their books, and the texts contained within them, as spiritual and physical protection against devilish attacks. Not only were texts adapted and manipulated by redactors for defensive reading, the form of the manuscripts themselves encouraged their readers to treat them as allegorical, even literal, shields.

In order to evidence this reading practice, this dissertation explores the transmission history, textual content, and cultural contexts of two Middle English verse texts. Part I shows how 'O Vernicle,' a fourteenth century lyric on the *arma Christi* (the 'arms of Christ'), exemplifies the ritualistic nature of defensive reading. Extant in ten rolls and ten codices, the textual presentation encourages the reader to imaginatively arm themselves with the *arma Christi*, turning those weapons once used against Christ into their 'armor of God' (Eph. 6:11). Part II focuses on the late thirteenth-century collection of *sanctorale* and *temporale* entries known as the *South English Legendary*. It deals

predominantly with an early reader of the collection – a redactor whose 'edits' transformed the historical trajectory of the *South English Legendary*, imbued it with a defensive purpose, and shaped the way it was recopied through the fourteenth and fifteenth century. The content of both texts, made up of image/text *arma Christi* units and hagiographic *vitae* and *temporale* respectively, divide and compartmentalize the reading experience. This suits the defensive agenda, allowing the reader to collect 'textual shields' as spiritual armor.

Putting on the Armor of God defines a widespread cultural practice – 'defensive reading.' It demonstrates not only that medieval readers consciously read certain devotional Middle English texts in order to defend themselves against spiritual evils, but also that they were copied and redacted with this purpose in mind. Ultimately it shows that, in the later Middle Ages, reading was a way of putting on the 'armor of God' (Eph. 6:11).

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Ruth Hannah Mullett completed an undergraduate M.A. (Hons) in English and Mediaeval History at the University of St Andrews, before going on to complete a M.St. in English 650-1550 at Oxford University. She began her Ph.D. in Medieval Studies at Cornell University in 2011, earning a M.A. in 2014. Her Ph.D. dissertation was written under the supervision of Andrew Galloway (chair), Andrew Hicks, and Samantha Zacher. Broadly speaking, Ruth is interested in how medieval literary history can be seen to move through a conversation with the cultural past, and her dissertation interacts with this question. Ruth's research interests extend to include book history, paleography and codicology, and digital humanities (particularly manuscript imaging and digital cataloging techniques).

For JCM and CJD

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Add. – Additional

LgA – Legenda Aurea

BL – British Library

CCCC – Cambridge, Corpus Christi College

CUL – Cambridge University Library

DIMEV – Digital Index of Middle English Verse

EETS – Early English Text Society

ME – Middle English

MS – Manuscript

OE – Old English

PDE – Present Day English

SEL – South English Legendary

SELS – South English Legendaries

STC – Short Title Catalogue

INTRODUCTION

When St Paul instructs the Ephesians to '[p]ut you on the armor of the God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil' and take up the 'sword of the Spirit (that is the word of God),' he suggests allegorically arming the body and soul with words. Scripture, he contends, can be a defensive and offensive weapon in the perpetual fight against devilish temptation. In this dissertation, I argue for the emergence, from the mid-thirteenth century, of a defensive reading practice, one that understood words as textual shields and their manuscript objects as amulets.

The use of words to defend oneself against all kinds of devilish temptations has a long tradition in the Christian Church, and early commentators were quick adopters of the Pauline ideal of spiritual arming.[1] In Anglo-Saxon England, according to Karen Jolly, the lorica tradition includes 'protective verbal shields that embody Ephesian instruction.'[2] Charms and ritualized prayers also offered a means to seek protection through verbal recitation.[3] The Christian goal of protecting the body and soul from temptation and evil intertwined with the performance of ritual and magical practice, and Karen Jolly notes

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[1] For example, Tertullian in *Aduersus Marcionem* wrote of Christ as warrior wielding an allegorical sword, and Ambrose in *Explanatio Psalmorum XII* of the need to fight against invisible evils with the weapons of God. See Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem*, Oxford early Christian texts Ernest Evans (ed.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972) lib.: 3, and Ambrose, *Explanatio psalmorum XII*, Michaela Zelzer (ed.) (Vindobonae: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1999), psalmus: 36, cap.: 24, par.: 1.

[2] Karen Louise Jolly, *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Middle Ages*, Athlone History of Witchcraft and Magic in Europe ; v. 3 (London: Athlone, 2002), p. 43.

[3] See Karen Louise Jolly, *Popular Religion in Late Saxon England: Elf Charms in Context* (Chapel Hill ; London: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), for more on Anglo-Saxon charms, and Karen Louise Jolly, "Prayers from the Field: Practical Protection and Demonic Defense in Anglo-Saxon England," *Traditio* 61 (2006): 95–147, for ritualized prayers from 10th century Northumbria.

that '[o]ral formulas recited for protection include blessings, adjurations and exorcisms, often combined with ritual actions such as the sign of the cross.'[4]

By the mid-thirteenth century, the kind of text utilized for defensive reading had widened. Beyond ritual texts and prayers, readers were encouraged to recite devotional texts including hagiography, lyric, and prayer, for spiritual protection. Defensive reading utilizes the textual content, the format of the manuscript object, the ritualistic use of text and image, and the writing and reframing of narratives as a means for readers to don the armor of God. Copyists and authors drew out the defensive potential of such texts by compartmentalizing textual units ('shields'), achieved through their content and form on the manuscript page. By tracing transmission and highlighting how particular readers, compilers, copyists, and even illustrators made efforts to promote this form of reading, we gain clues as to the prevalence of such practice. Defensive reading was at at once personal and performative and, on occasion, ritualistic and affective.

In this two-part dissertation, I explore the transmission history and cultural contexts of two Middle English verse texts – 'O Vernicle' and the *South English Legendary*. The content of both texts, consisting of *vitae* and *arma Christi* stanzas, allow for modular reading, for each textual unit to be compartmentalized and isolated. This suits the defensive agenda, allowing the reader to collect 'textual shields.' Part I takes as its focus the likely fourteenth-century lyric 'O Vernicle' (DIMEV 4083) – a short lyric poem which embraces a ritualistic form of defensive reading. Each of the poem's twenty-four stanzas takes an instrument of Christ's Passion as its focus.

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[4] Jolly, *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe*, p. 43.

Part I, Section 1, examines the textual and iconographic contexts of 'O Vernicle.' I demonstrate initially that *arma Christi* representations are treated as both relics of the Passion and heraldic symbols of Christ's Passion. This context imbues them with material power, and defensive possibility. For example, the heraldic presentation of the *arma Christi* within shields on the walls of parishes churches and on the tombs of the deceased is, I argue, understood as the literal embodiment of the 'shield of faith' (Eph. 6:16). The defensive potential is fulfilled in 'O Vernicle,' a lyric that combines text and image in the creation of spiritual shields. The witnesses to 'O Vernicle' attest to the text and manuscript object itself becoming a site for apotropaic, even amuletic, use. From here, I examine the manuscript tradition of 'O Vernicle.' The poem is extant in twenty manuscripts, of which ten are illustrated rolls, and usually consists of twenty-four stanzas, each proposing devotion to an individual instrument. I argue that the unusual roll format, along with the unique relationship between text and image in these witnesses, promotes a form of modular reading and viewing that encourages the user to imagine themselves into the Passion narrative.

In order to demonstrate how meditation upon the objects of Christ's Passion can come to embody the defensive capabilities of a single text, Section 2, *Reading Redactions,* deals with the reception of the ten codices and ten illustrated rolls that contain the 'O Vernicle' lyric.[5] I argue that the ten rolls, due to their unusual narrow roll

[5] I deliberately do not call the rolls by their established name, the *arma Christi* rolls for the simple reason that there are numerous other examples of rolls containing arma illustration, which are not associated with the Middle English 'O Vernicle' poem, and have varying purposes and significances. This has also been noted by Edstall, who comments that '*Arma Christi* imagery is, in fact, quite common enough on textual amulets and devotional doubles to call into question whether the ten so-called *Arma Christi* rolls, should, more correctly be called 'O Vernicle' Rolls - since what distinguishes them is the prayer poem, not the imagery'. Mary Agnes Edsall, "*Arma*

format and their unique relationship between text and image, encourage the user to imaginatively arm themselves with the *arma Christi*, turning those weapons once used by Christ into their 'armour of God' (Eph. 6:13). I trace how 'O Vernicle's' refrain, spoken by the reader, to 'schilde' and 'kepe' designates the text and the *arma Christi* as a meditative tools for spiritual protection. In many 'O Vernicle' manuscripts, this textual instruction works alongside illustrations of the *arma Christi*. These illustrations are not presented as alternatives to reading, but rather they work alongside the text to compartmentalize *arma Christi* shields.[6] As the reader/viewer interacts with the text, they imaginatively arm themselves with the *arma Christi*, turning those weapons once used against Christ into the armor of God (Eph. 6:13).

Part II examines the manipulation of the late-thirteenth century legendary collection, the *South English Legendary* (herafter, *SEL*) for a defensive purpose. Part II, Section 1, *Texts and Contexts,* examines the *SEL's* audiences, as well as its textual tradition (incorporating a discussion of manuscripts, redactions, manuscript type, and approaches to textual criticism). Copied either in whole or in part through the fifteenth century, the text is extant in over sixty witnesses, more than any other thirteenth century English verse text. The manuscripts that survive reveal forms of spiritual arming that

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Christi Rolls or Textual Amulets?: The Narrow Roll Format Manuscripts of 'O Vernicle,'" *mrw Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 9, no. 2 (2014): 178–209, p. 204.

[6] In this way, 'O Vernicle' functions in accordance to medieval reading practices. Walter notes that 'part of the work of medieval reading more generally, across its monastic, scholastic, and lay iterations, *is* image-making.' Katie L. Walter, 'Reading without Books,' in Mary Catherine Flannery and Carrie Griffin, eds., *Spaces for Reading in Later Medieval England*, New Middle Ages (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 116. Walter also points to Carruthurs for further discussion of this issue in Mary J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, 2nd ed., Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature ; 70 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 276.

range from reading and copying with a defensive agenda, to the apotropaic use of the manuscript object.

Demonstrating the interaction between literary and historical complexity, Section 2, *Reading Redactions*, deals with an early reader of the collection – a redactor whose 'edits' transform the historical trajectory of the *SEL*, imbuing it with a defensive purpose and shaping the way it was recopied through the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. I demonstrate how an individual (usually referred to as a/the 'A-redactor' and here called the *Banna*-poet), reframed the text to posit the saints as spiritual warriors and their *vitae* as spiritual shields. The nature of *SEL* allows readers to collect saintly role models by mental accretion. In this collecting of saints as role models for both an allegorical and perhaps literal arming I see analogs to the collecting of *arma Christi* – the saints' lives are a defensive commodity that were used to build up an arsenal of spiritual weaponry.

The shaping of the *SEL vitae* into textual shields is achieved, in part, by the *Banna*-poet's addition of a 'prologue' (the *Banna*) that describes saints as warriors of God engaged in a spiritual battle against evil. When the *Banna*-poet writes of a battle fought by Christ and his saints ('Þe bataille was strang inou . þat oure swete Louerd nom / And his deciples suþþe abrod . to hold up Cristendom'),[7] he imagines a world informed by its creation under siege. While Thomas Liszka has extensively argued that this 'prologue' is 'not really a prologue at all' and rather a transition between the *sanctorale* (fixed saints' feasts) and *temporale* (movable feasts),[8] I argue that regardless of the

[7] Charlotte D'Evelyn and Anna Jean Mill, *The South English Legendary*. (London; New York: Published for the Early English Text Society by the Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 2.
[8] This is the phrasing of Blurton and Wogan-Brown in summarizing Liszka's argument. Introduction, Heather Blurton and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, *Rethinking the South English Legendaries*, Manchester Medieval Literature and Culture (Manchester: Manchester University

Banna's placement, the *Banna*-poet considers it a schematic of the collection as a whole. The fact that the text was quickly adopted as a prologue in eight early manuscripts points to a wide reader reception in support of the A-redactor's goals. I also argue that other entries, particularly the life of Thomas Becket and Rogationtide, are heavily edited or added by the *Banna*-poet and confirm a thematic interest in spiritual defenses.

The evidence examined in this dissertation spans the period between 1250 and 1550. I do not progress chronologically but begin with the fourteenth-century lyric, 'O Vernicle,' before moving on to the thirteenth century *SEL*. There are several reasons for this temporal inversion. In many ways, 'O Vernicle' showcases the material potential of defensive reading. The manuscript witnesses frequently compartmentalize the *arma* as textual and contextual shields. Furthermore, in some cases, they even point to use as amulet (that is, certain manuscripts may have been carried on the person as an object that could ward off temptation and evil). 'O Vernicle' therefore arguably represents the holistic culmination of devotional defensive reading in the Middle Ages. The *SEL* is earlier, with its origins in the mid-thirteenth century, and has a longer and more complex textual tradition. As the text was copied and recopied through the fifteenth century, we see more flexibility in how individual *vitae* are copied and shapes, and is shaped by, the reading practices of the period. I focus specifically on the influence of a particular reader-redactor, who defined the agenda of this collection of *vitae* and *temporale* as defensive and modular. In this way, the dissertation moves from culmination to case-study.

Press, 2011), p. 4. Liszka writes, 'the fact that the *Banna* was written to be a transition from the *temporale* to the *sanctorale* became obscured.' Thomsa Liszka, 'The *South English Legendaries*,' in Blurton and Wogan-Browne, p. 37.

In both Parts I and II, I demonstrate that by reading redactions (redactions are, of course, the product of active contemporary reading and writing) we can better understand how these texts were received and used. I aim for a holistic approach to the study of texts and their manuscripts by presenting a discussion on textual transmission and the material form of witnesses, alongside literary study of the text. While the study of transmission and codicology has largely been isolated from the analysis of more 'literary' reading practices and medieval ideologies to date, there are good reasons for combining such a study. Transmission and textual/visual histories are embedded in the demands of their readers and demonstrate how the texts were used and manipulated for specific audiences.

Intervening in existing scholarship on medieval cultures of reading and devotion, I highlight the potential of manuscript objects, textual collections, and textual transmission to aid readers in performing spiritual defense. As such, my work lies at the intersection of several different fields of scholarship. Studies of ritual religion and apotropaic texts have seen something of a flourishing in recent years, beginning with the publication of Don C. Skemer's 2006 monograph, *Binding Words*.[9] Skemer recounts the flourishing, in the fifteenth century, of what might be best described as 'textual amulets,' that is, textual objects that are seen to go beyond defensive apotropaic imagery, and actively help dispel the devil. Nicole R. Rice, in 2008, published on lay piety and

[9] Don C. Skemer, *Binding Words: Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages*, Magic in History (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006).

religious discipline,[10] and the following year, Derek A. Rivard published *Blessing the World*, both of which investigate the ritualistic side of lay piety.[11]

Studies on the *SEL* have, to date, largely been isolated to either the manuscripts or content. For example, Görlach's expansive study of the *SEL* manuscripts, *The Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary*, largely neglects a study of its literary contents,[12] and Thompson's study of the *SEL* literary narratives, *Everyday Saints and the Art of Narrative*, pays little attention to bibliography.[13] Several shorter essays have addressed this division, take Edsall's '*Arma Christi* Rolls or Textual Amulets?' and 'Pickering's 'The Outspoken *South English Legendary* Poet,' for example,[14] but these examples are arguably unrepresentative of the scholarly trends. Here, I consider the manuscript tradition alongside the development of the *SEL*'s content. Furthermore, the meditative forms of reading so frequently cited as the common mode for reading in the Middle Ages are compatible with the defensive forms of devotion. Couch, for example, writes that '[i]n general, medieval literature forms elicits a meditative form of reading, that is, a reverential and reflexive form of reading,'[15] and Amsler that 'reading is active rather than passive, especially when a religious reader creates images and affects of

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[10] Nicole R. Rice, *Lay Piety and Religious Discipline in Middle English Literature*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature ; 73 (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
[11] Derek A. Rivard, *Blessing the World: Ritual and Lay Piety in Medieval Religion* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2009).
[12] Manfred Görlach, *The Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary* (Leeds: University of Leeds School of English, 1974).
[13] Anne B. (Anne Booth) Thompson, *Everyday Saints and the Art of Narrative in the South English Legendary* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).
[14] Edsall, "Arma Christi Rolls or Textual Amulets?"; and Pickering, 'The Outspoken *South English Legendary* Poet,' in A. I. Doyle and A. J. Minnis, *Late-Medieval Religious Texts and Their Transmission: Essays in Honour of A.I. Doyle*, York Manuscripts Conferences ; v.3 (Woodbridge: D S Brewer, 1994).
[15] Julie Nelson Couch, "Defiant Devotion in MS Laud Misc. 108: The Narrator of Havelok the Dane and Affective Piety," *Parergon* 25, no. 1 (October 25, 2008): 53–79, p. 54.

devotion while engaged with the text or listening to or contemplating it.'[16] Within the texts examined in this dissertation, textual, iconographic, and symbolic defenses are a result of a considered, meditative reading.

Text/image relationships form an important part of the study of 'O Vernicle,' an area where research often concentrates on individual manuscripts, rather than trends in transmission – take, for example, Kathryn Smith's study of three Books of Hours[17], and Jessica Brantley's manuscript study of British Library, MS Add. 32079.[18] Kathryn Rudy takes a more thematically centered approach in her work on uses of images within manuscripts. She engages with the material history of manuscripts, and how readers received them.[19] This overlaps with the approaches of other material philologists, such as Elaine Treharne who writes of her book, *Living Through Conquest,* that 'this book seeks to raise the profile of not only the significant number and variety of English texts written in the years between 1020 and 1220, but also to provide an overview of their contexts of production.'[20] It is a similarly holistic study that I aim for here – to consider how the

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[16] Mark Amsler, *Affective Literacies: Writing and Multilingualism in the Late Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), p. 113.
[17] Kathryn A. (Kathryn Ann) Smith, *Art, Identity and Devotion in Fourteenth-Century England: Three Women and Their Books of Hours* (London : [Toronto] : British Library ; University of Toronto Press, 2003).
[18] Jessica Brantley, *Reading in the Wilderness: Private Devotion and Public Performance in Late Medieval England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).
[19] See Kathryn M. Rudy, *Postcards on Parchment : The Social Lives of Medieval Books* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015). Kathryn M. Rudy, "Kissing Images, Unfurling Rolls, Measuring Wounds, Sewing Badges and Carrying Talismans: Considering Some Harley Manuscripts through the Physical Rituals They Reveal," *Electronic British Library Journal* 3 (2011): Article 5. Kathryn M. Rudy, "Imaging Policies for Medieval Manuscripts in Three University Libraries Compared," *Visual Resources* 27, no. 4 (2011): 345–359. Kathryn M. Rudy, *Rubrics, Images and Indulgences in Late Medieval Netherlandish Manuscripts*, Library of the Written Word ; 55 (Leiden: Brill, 2017).
[20] Elaine M Treharne, *Living through Conquest: The Politics of Early English, 1020-1220* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 7.

transmission of these texts brings the literary and reading cultures of the later Middle Ages into relief. Working across literary, iconographic, and bibliographic fields of study, I show in this dissertation how the manuscripts and histories of medieval texts attest to the cultivation of texts designed to promote and enable defensive reading.

PART I: ‘O VERNICLE’ AND THE *ARMA CHRISTI* TRADITION

Introduction

The oath delivered by the drunken Miller in *The Canterbury Tales* is sworn, "By armes and by blood and bones" (l. 3125).[1] To swear upon ‘armes and by blood and bones’ is to acknowledge firstly, that ‘armes,’[2] or *arma Christi,* belong in the same category as relics and, secondly that, like relics, they held some kind of spiritual power. Positioned alongside relics of blood or bones, the ‘armes,’ bear witness to the action of the oath.[3] For the Miller, swearing on Christ’s ‘armes’ was a means to invoke the promise of divine agency, an agency comparable with that of saints’ relics or intercessors.

For the most part, the *arma Christi* represent isolated incidents in the Passion narrative. Most are inanimate participants in Christ’s torture; for example, the scourges that beat him, the sponge that offered him gall, the column he was bound to, the spear used to pierce his side, the cross he was crucified upon. Others are non-scriptural, such as the pelican pecking at its breast (a symbol for Christ’s sacrifice),[4] or animate, such as the hand that slapped the face of Jesus. Yet, at the moment of Christ’s crucifixion, they were

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[1] Chaucer, Geoffrey, *The Canterbury Tales,* Robert Boenig and Andrew Taylor (eds), p. 97.
[2] The edition from which this quote is taken assumes ‘armes’ to refer to Christ’s actual limbs ('Swearing during the Middle Ages and Renaissance often involved taking oaths on various parts of God's body - here God's arms, blood, and bones'). As there is no named subject of these arms, I disagree and believe it much more likely this in fact refers to the the *arma Christi,* weapons that traditionally had protective and spiritual power. Ibid., p. 97.
[3] Swearing upon holy objects was common practice in the Middle Ages. Woolgar writes that ‘[c]losely related [to touching the sacraments] were the practices of swearing while touching relis or holy books, and trial by ordeal. The virtue of the object that was touched revealed the truth or falsity of the parties involved.’ Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England,* p. 46.
[4] The pelican legendarily feeds its starving young by bleeding itself to death.

all (with the exception of the allegorical pelican) literal, material objects or things.[5] In this way, they are both relics and reproductions – they were thought to exist as physical objects, but they were also reproduced in image. They become, as Lisa H. Cooper and Andrea Denny-Brown note, 'material *representation[s]* of material objects.'[6] Their widespread appeal is arguably due to the belief that spiritual power, and therefore defensive agency, could be harnessed through representation.

The *arma Christi* were widely reproduced through printed woodcuts,[7] carvings on parish fonts,[8] or wall paintings.[9] In manuscripts, they appear in elaborately colored illustrations surrounding a crucified Christ, as well as in modest marginal sketches or illustrations.[10] In this way, the *arma* had both a physical, literal presence through the discovery and veneration of objects of the Passion (take the early accounts of Invention of the Holy Cross, for example)[11] and allegorical meaning through interpretative

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[5] See Introduction in Lisa H. Cooper and Andrea Denny-Brown, *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture: With a Critical Edition of "O Vernicle"* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2014), p. 3. The *arma Christi* were 'material representation[s] of material objects.'

[6] A phrase Cooper and Denny-Browne use to describe the *arma Christi* in their Introduction to Cooper and Denny-Brown, *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture*, p. 3.

[7] See, for example, the woodcut indulgence found bound within London, British Library, C.10.b16, a copy of the *Directorium sacerdotum ad usum Sarum*, printed by William Caxton, c. 1484. For an image see Cooper and Denny-Brown.

[8] See, for example, the fifteenth-century octagonal font of St Lawrence's parish church in Snarford, Lincolnshire, which is decorated with a figure of the Veronica set behind Christ's head, and an *arma Christi* shield with cross and two scourges.

[9] See, for example, the fourteenth-century wall paintings of St. Mary's and All Saints parish church in Willingham, Cambridgeshire, which is painted with *arma Christi* shields.

[10] For example, see London, British Library, MS Royal 6.E.VI, f. 15r for a high-grade illustration of the *arma Christi*, and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley Rolls 16, for modest *arma Christi* representations.

[11] See, for example, Ronald C Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims : Popular Beliefs in Medieval England* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1977), p. 44. 'From a very early description of pilgrimage to the Holy Land we learn that the True Cross was venerated in the midst of a guard posted round the piece of wood.'

representations of the *arma* as object in text, image, and sculpture. While the relics of lesser holy figures might need to physically touch the sponsor, the relics of the *arma Christi* had power simply through their reproduction.

Before I explore the uses of the *arma Christi* in the manuscript witnesses to the fourteenth-century lyric, 'O Vernicle,' I will first elaborate how the *arma Christi*, even as representations, took on a meaning and materiality akin to relics, reliquaries, and even weapons. The *arma Christi* are visual cues to 'remember' Christ's Passion and were, I argue, understood or 'read' as a summary (and in some cases an expansion) of Passion narratives. Their intimate connection to the story of Christ's Passion made them particularly suited to penitential devotion. Edsall writes that:

> their compressed form sharpens the depiction of pain and suffering into an effective instrument of compunction: the piercing realization of personal sin and fear of Hell, or of the grace of Salvation, or even both [...] they are particularly well suited to penitential exhortation. The primary effect of these syncopated enumerations is to evoke horror – both at the cruelty of the Passion and the depth of human sinfulness. But they were also easily expanded and used as a *ductus*, as a route of thinking through the Passion.[12]

Despite serving as memorial devices for the Passion, I disagree with Edsall's claim that the 'primary effect [of the *arma Christi*] is to evoke horror.' While the *arma* may surround an image of a bloodied Christ in Man of Sorrows iconography, the objects of the *arma* rarely engage with the body of Christ. They are presented as isolated objects, and any affective reading requires an imaginative effort from their viewer. For example, on f. 10r of the Passional of Abbess Kunigunde (c. 1314-1321), a bloodied Christ, with head bowed is surrounded by labelled *arma* (see Figure 1).[13] Despite drops of blood

[12] Mary Agnes Edsall, 'The *Arma Christi* before the *Arma Christi'* in Cooper and Denny-Brown, *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture,* p. 41.
[13] Prague, National Library of the Czech Republic, MS XIV.A.17, f. 103.

dotting the *arma,* the affective focus is on the representation of Christ, and the process of viewing the *arma*. The reader has to rotate their gaze around the body of Christ as a devotional exercise. Any affective use must come from the imagination or the memory.[14] While an affective image (like the actual representation of Christ's body in a Man of Sorrows representation) emphasizes the graphic nature of suffering and pain – the *arma Christi*, despite being weapons for this suffering, are rarely viewed inflicting it. Rather, spiritual benefit is derived from reading the objects in conversation with a meditation on the Passion *and* a ritualistic concentration on the *arma* as defensive object or amulet.

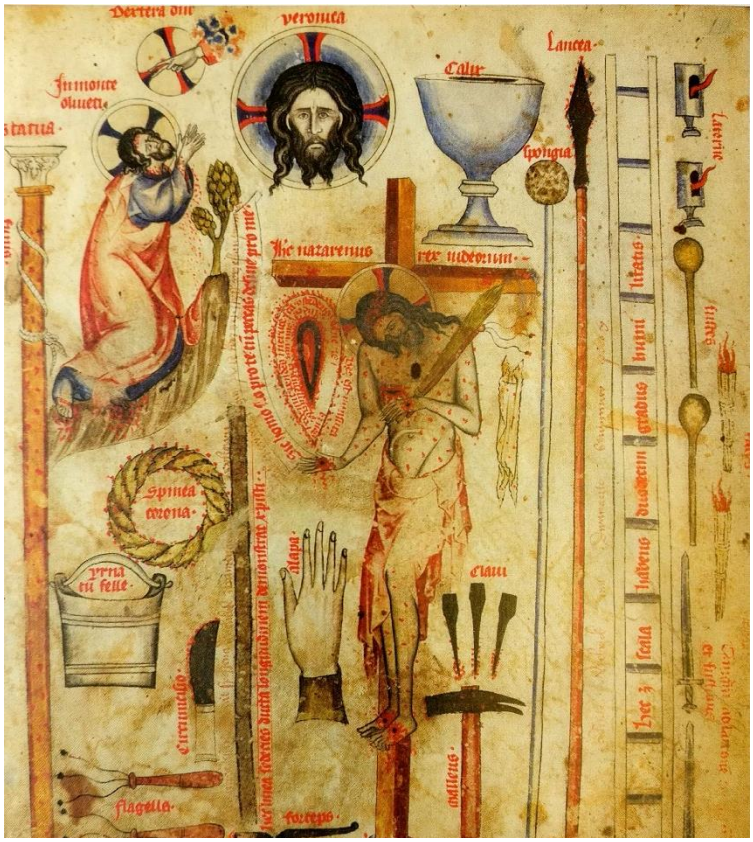

Figure 1 Prague, National Library of the Czech Republic, MS XIV.A.17, f. 10r. Image credit: Cooper and Denny-Brown, The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture, p. 114.

As devotional iconography reliant on imaginative engagement, the *arma Christi* were applicable across social structures. Images were considered 'texts' for the illiterate. The fifteenth-century debate, *Dives et Pauper,* for example, describes imagery as 'a tokene and a peynture that clerkys redyn in boke.'[15] These

[14] See Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*.
[15] P. H. Barnum, ed., *Dives et Pauper*, EETS 275 (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 82.

images, like written texts, had their own complex meanings and demanded certain performances. By the time 'O Vernicle' was copied onto rolls alongside illustrations of the *arma Christi* in the fifteenth century, the *arma* were already understood as symbols of defensive power that prompted ritualistic devotion. They were complex signifiers to the literate and illiterate alike to perform a devotional, frequently defensive, reponse.

Throughout the Middle Ages, apotropaic texts and objects are not restricted to the magical world of secular alchemy and astrology. Rather, Christian images and relics, including the *arma Christi*, were frequently used ritualistically. This ritualistic use of Christian texts and symbols prompted criticism by those who held concerns over their orthodoxy. Watkins points to the *Vita* of the twelfth-century bishop, St Hugh of Lincoln, for its criticism of the use of physical over mental image: 'why should we gape at a sensuous image of this divine gift when every day we behold by faith this heavenly sacrifice whole and entire?'[16] The 'Twelve Conclusions of the Lollards' (1396-97) repeated some of these concerns. The eighth conclusion, on pilgrimages, complains that the service to the cross 'is fulfillid of ydolatrie, for if þe rode tre, naylis, and þe spere and þe coroune of God schulde ben so holiche wochipid, þanne were Iudas lippis, qwoso mythte hem gete, a wondir gret relyk.'[17] This tongue-in-cheek chastisement that Christians may as well venerate Judas' lips is reminiscent of the Pardoner's admission of

[16] C. S. Watkins, *History and the Supernatural in Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). p. 107. Quoting, of Eynsham Adam, *The Life of St Hugh of Lincoln*, ed. Decima L. Douie and David Hugh Farmer, Medieval Texts (London: Nelson, 1961), pp. 92-95.
[17] The Twelve Confessions of the Lollards in Anne Hudson, *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings* (Toronto: Published by the University of Toronto Press in association with the Medieval Academy of America, 1997), 8th Conclusion, 'On Pilgrimage.' p. 27. The fifth conclusion of the Lollards more widely criticizes ritualistic use of physical objects, writing, 'þat exorcismis and halwinge made in þe chirche of wyn, bred and wax, water, salt and oyle and encens, þe ston of þe auter, upon uestiment, mitre, crose and pilgrimes stauis be þe uerray practy[s] of nigromancie rathere þanne of þe holi theologie' 5th Conclusion, 'On Exorcisms and Harrowings,' pp. 25-6.

false relics. In the Prologue to the Pardoner's Tale, the Pardoner admits, 'Relikes been they, as wenen they echoon. Thanne have [I] in latoun a sholder boon / Which that was of an hooly Jewes sheep' (ll. 349-351),[18] relinquishing their holy significance and belittling their protective power as amulets. While there are objections to the attribution of power to symbols, objects, texts, and incantations, their widespread survival in otherwise 'orthodox' contexts reveals that many considered them effectual.

While I agree with Bale that '*[a]rma Christi* rolls were designed to foster an immediate devotional response, a contemplative immersion in Christ's Passion,'[19] I would nuance that claim that it is not simply contemplative, or even affective, but defensive. In scholarship, the *arma Christi* are usually associated with affective meditation.[20] I argue, however, that while the *arma Christi* were frequently adopted in images depicting and embracing Christ's suffering, this affective reading is secondary to that of its defensive use in the 'O Vernicle' manuscripts. The *arma Christi* attest to a practice that embraces the ritualistic elements of medieval Christianity, encouraging viewers to understand these representations of objects as a means to put on spiritual armor and shield themselves from the 'fiery darts of the most wicked one' (Eph. 6:16).

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[18] Chaucer, Boenig, and Taylor, *The Canterbury Tales*, p. 267.
[19] Anthony Paul Bale, *The Jew in the Medieval Book: English Antisemitisms, 1350-1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 157-62. The *arma Christi* are often associated with affective meditation, see, for example, Noonan's comment that 'While the *arma Christi* seem often to have functioned as iconographic focal points for affective meditational practices, in the *Symbols* ['O Vernicle'] they are placed in a loosely narrated format' in Sarah Noonan, "Private Reading and the Rolls of the Symbols of the Passion," *Journal of the Early Book Society*, no. 15 (June 2012), p. 289.
[20] See, for example, Noonan's comment that 'While the *arma Christi* seem often to have functioned as iconographic focal points for affective meditational practices, in the *Symbols* ['O Vernicle'] they are placed in a loosely narrated format' in Sarah Noonan, "Private Reading and the Rolls of the Symbols of the Passion," *Journal of the Early Book Society*, no. 15 (June 2012), p. 289.

1. Texts and Contexts

In Scripture, the *arma Christi* are textual tools of violence. By the late Middle Ages, they were transformed into textual, visual, and physical weapons with which Christians can fight the devil. Objects and weapons of Christ's Passion, the *arma Christi* are comparable to the symbols and relics of saintly martyrdom. Saintly attributes were revered objects and symbols that established and guided the penitent's response, reminding viewers of the saints' martyrdom, suffering, or purity. They were objects made relic, whether in physical or symbolic form, and the saint was recognized, revered, and praised through such attributes. As such, the *arma Christi* stand at the junction between the physical and spiritual world for the medieval viewer – once simply objects, they become powerful symbols and relics of the most significant event in Christian history.

This section, *Texts and Contexts*, will examine how the tradition of *arma Christi* veneration embraced a ritualistic form of defensive devotion that identified the *arma* as spiritual shields.[21] Crossing societal boundaries, devotion to the *arma* was widespread and affordable. Gayk has noted that '[i]t is precisely *in* the *arma*'s capacity to move between setting and adapt to different media (manuscript, print, and inscription) [...] that we can understand the persistent vitality of the instrument of the Passion in post-medieval

[21] Shannon Gayk has previously noted the *arma Christi's* potential to act as spiritual shield in, 'Early Modern Afterlives of the *Arma Christi*' in Cooper and Denny-Brown, *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture;* '[a]s instruments of Christ's suffering, the *arma Christi* embody the fine line between mnemonic device and relic, encouraging veneration, affective meditation, and penitential response. As instruments of Christ's victory, they may function as "shields" against sin and material means of redemption, offering protection not only from the pains of hell but also from earthly suffering,' p. 273.

Figure 2 The British Museum, AF.897, "Coventry Ring." Image credit: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=45589&partId=1?

pieties.'[22] Following this, Part I, Section 2 will examine the implementation of the *arma Christi* in 'O Vernicle,' its partner texts, and its witnesses, an initial examination of how the *arma Christi* function as amuletic objects will provide the context for usage. As I will demonstrate, the *arma Christi* were considered to hold spiritual defensive power, even without the presence of their literal counterparts, offering similar properties as saints' relics. Relics and amulets both gained protective efficacy through contact with their users,[23] and offered miraculous and protective powers. Many amulets also embraced the power of the *arma Christi*; for example, the late fifteenth-century Coventry Ring, designed to be worn as protection, features an amuletic text and an engraved figure of Christ as the Man of Sorrows surrounded by the *arma Christi* (see Figure 2). The ring, which would be worn against the skin draws on the same

[22] Shannon Gayk, 'Early Modern Afterlives of the *Arma Christi*' in Ibid., p. 275.
[23] As noted by Woolgar: 'Amulets worked in a similar fashion, by physical contact and proximity. They might be directly associated with Christian religion, perhaps as reliquaries, such as the Middleham Jewel; by texts engraved on them, such as the Coventry Ring; or directly with certain saints, such as the badges and emblems of pilgrims.'Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, p. 54.

protective principles of wearable reliquaries containing physical objects for veneration (for example, see The British Museum's c. 1340 pendant supposedly housing a thorn from the Crown of Thorns).[24] It is out of this well established tradition of the instruments of Christ's passion becoming relics that 'O Vernicle' is born.

The Arma Christi Tradition

Arma Christi as Relic

The *arma Christi* gain a material history in the post-Conquest period that informs their status as relics, or even something beyond relics. Throughout the Middle Ages, various items of the *arma* were 'discovered' – most commonly, relics of the nails, thorns, and the True Cross.[25] Literature embraced the materiality of the *arma* by ascribing dramatized 'creation' narratives for individual arma in the style of miracle stories. The cross, the veronica, and the crown of thorns were particularly popular for such narratives. The *SEL*, for example, recounts the invention and discovery of the True Cross, while ascribing to it a prestigious scriptural history that traces the story back to Genesis and Adam. Rather like a royal genealogy, the *SEL* describes how seeds were placed under Adam's tongue when he died, the seeds grew into trees which were taken up and replanted by Moses, David then found the trees and took them to Jerusalem, they then

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[24] The British Museum, 1902,0210.1, "Reliquary pendant of the Holy Thorn." Description available at: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/. Accessed August 1st 2017.

[25] The thirteenth-century Sainte Chappelle, for example, was built to house King Louis IX of France's Passion relics, including the Crown of Thorns.

became a sign of the Holy Trinity. The story continues until Christ comes to earth and one tree is made into a cross for Christ's crucifixion. It is then buried for two hundred years until it is discovered by Constantine's mother, Helena. In order to find the cross, Helena threatens a Jew, Judas, with death unless he reveal the cross' hidden location, which he does, converts to Christianity, and changes his name to Quiriac (incidentally, Quiriac later finds the nails too). Shortly thereafter, the cross begins performing miracles and tormenting the Devil by reviving a corpse.[26] Great attention is paid to the legacy, physicality, and spirituality of the cross as a devotional object and such attentions authenticate the spiritual power of the object.

The focus on the cross' historical trajectory is also accompanied by discussions of its specific role in the crucifixion story. As early as the eighth century in England, the cross is understood as a primary witness to the Passion. In the Old English dream-vision, 'The Dream of the Rood',[27] the cross, 'speaking' in the first person, reminisces that 'Þæt wæs geara iu, Ic þæt gyta geman, / þæt Ic wæs aheawen holtes on ende, / astyred of stene minum' (ll. 28-30a).[28] The act of the cross' remembrance mimics that of the reader's imaginative efforts to understand the Passion. Like the cross, they should try and imagine themselves into the crucifixion narrative. Just as the description of Christ is active as he willingly mounts the cross ('Geseah Ic þa Frean mancynnes / efstan elne

[26] D'Evelyn and Mill, *The South English Legendary*, History of the Holy Cross, pp.167-74.
[27] The poem is found extant in the tenth-century Vercelli Book. Extracts from the poem are also carved in runes in the early eighth-century Ruthwell Cross, found in Northumbria.
[28] Elaine M Treharne, *Old and Middle English, c.890-c.1450: an anthology* (Chichester, West Sussex; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p. 122-3. All translations from this poem taken from the same edition. 'That was very long ago, I remember it still, that I was cut down from the edge of the wood,/ ripped up by my roots.'

mycle þæt he me wolde on gestigan' l. 34b-35),[29] the cross narrates the effort to support Christ's body 'Þær Ic þa ne dorste ofer Dryhtnes word / bugan oððe berstan' (ll. 35-36a)[30]. Like many critics, Elaine Treharne observes that '[Christ] voluntarily ascends the Cross, indeed, 'embraces' the instrument of his death.'[31] But scholars have not emphasized that this makes the Cross and other instruments of his death into the 'armor' of protection. The poem not only authenticates the position of the cross as contact relic which Christ has climbed upon, but also shows Christ commandeering the object of his martyrdom as a symbol of his triumph. In doing so, the characterization of Christ is one that embodies his *miles Christi* status - he is a warrior who embraces the weapons of his death and, in doing so, he ascribes them power as spiritual armor.

Figure 3 Crux Vaticana, 6th century, Vatican City. Reliquary for fragments of the True Cross. Image credit: http://www.cruxvaticana.com/

'The Dream of the Rood' also demonstrates the visual associations between the cross and reliquaries. The cross appears embedded with gems and encased with gold:

[29] Ibid., pp. 122-3. 'I saw then the Saviour of mankind / hasten with great zeal, as if he wanted to climb up on me'.
[30] Ibid., pp. 122-3. 'There I did not dare, against the word of the Lord, / bow or break'
[31] Ibid., p. 120.

Eall þæt beacen wæs
Begoten mid golde; gimmas stodon
Fægere æt foldan sceatum, swylce þær fife wæron
Uppe on þam eaxlegespanne (ll.6b-9a)[32]

The visualization of the cross, glittering with gold and gems, leads the reader to imagine a highly-decorated reliquary, such as the sixth-century reliquary for fragments of the True Cross held in Vatican City – the Crux Vaticana (Figure 3). The grand appearance of many reliquaries was intended to do justice to sacred contents, and to authenticate the spiritual value of the object within. In presenting the cross as such, the 'Dream of the Rood' poet is attempting to designate the vision as authentic, the words as reliable, and the imagined object as spiritually powerful. Yet, despite the textual connection with the material, the poet is attempting to provide a devotional focus to the cross that is primarily imaginative, but with its roots in the material.

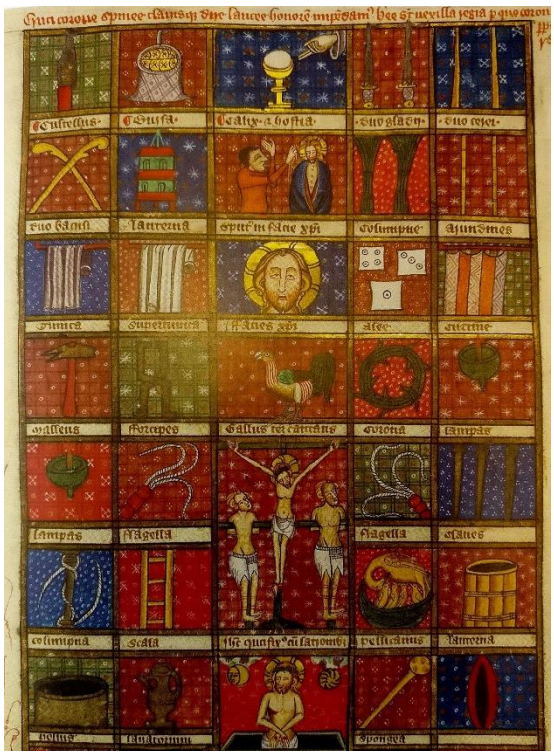

Figure 4 London, BL, MS Royal 6.E.VI, fol. 15r. Image credit: Cooper and Denny-Brown, The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture, p. 113.

Elsewhere, images of the *arma Christi* specifically mimic the organizational structure of compartmentalized reliquaries. I am by no means the first to notice this – Cooper and Denny-Brown have drawn attention to the way in which the *arma Christi* are frequently presented as reliquary

[32] Ibid. 'The Dream of the Rood', pp. 120-1. 'That beacon was entirely / cased in gold; beautiful gems stood / at the corners of the earth, likewise there were five / upon the cross-beam.'

using an illustration from a fourteenth-century *Omne Bonum* manuscript (London, British Library, MS Royal 6.E.VI, f. 15r): '[y]et in the context of the compartmentalized reliquaries that this illumination most closely resembles, even these figural symbols register their own artifactuality – their own material promise as things to be collected, organized, framed, labeled, and gazed upon'[33] (see Figure 4). Such images, and reliquaries, drew attention to their sanctified objects in an compartmentalized, or isolated, way – they call for examination one at a time. This mode of viewing ties itself to a ritualized performance of defensiveness, where each individual *arma* could serve as an apotropaic, that is '[h]aving or reputed to have the power of averting evil influence or ill luck,' as signifier or object.[34]

As well as looking like a relic or reliquary (though these were arguably inseparable from each other and are one and the same), the cross in 'The Dream of the Rood' has the power to offer miraculous healing: 'ond Ic hælan mæg / æghwylcne anra þara þe him bið egesa to me' (ll. 85b-86).[35] The 'power' offered by the cross is recognized for its protective potential. In fact, the cross even becomes weaponized. As Carragáin notes, '[l]ater in the poem, the Cross calls itself a 'bana' (66a): this term, primarily a legal one, denotes a person or object (such as a sword) who becomes the means, whether innocent or guilty, by which someone else is slain.'[36] The cross is a

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[33] Introduction in Cooper and Denny-Brown, *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture*, p. 2-3.
[34] "apotropaic, adj.". OED Online. June 2017. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com. Accessed November 21, 2017.
[35] Treharne, *Old and Middle English, c.890-c.1450*, p. 124-5. 'And I am able to heal / each one of those who is in awe of me'.
[36] The use of 'bana' here echoes the meaning of PDE 'bane': 'A slayer or murderer,' according to www.oed.com, accessed June 12, 2017. Éamonn Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood: Liturgical Images and the Old English Poems of the Dream of the Rood Tradition* (London: The British Library, 2005), p. 2.

symbolic sword of the spirit (Eph. 6:17), and this literalizes the idea that the weapons used against Christ can be transformed into weapons against his enemies.

The dreamer in the poem (representative of all penitent Christians), must demonstrate proper reverence to the cross in order to seek the spiritual benefits, but there is no implication that the devotion needs to be directed toward the historical artifact of the cross, the representation is sufficient. Not only must the dreamer acknowledge and show awe to the cross; they also have an obligation to evangelize their vision:

> Nu Ic þe hate, hæleð min se leofa,
> þæt ðu þas gesyhðe secge mannum
> onwreoh wordum þæt hit is wuldres beam
> se ðe ælmihtig God on þrowode
> for mancynnes manegum synnum
> ond Adomes ealdgewyrhtum (ll. 95-100a).[37]

The cross is ascribed agency as a miraculous relic, a primary witness to the Passion, and as a spiritual authority commanding correct devotional practice. Yet, correct devotion depends upon the acknowledgment of the cross' purpose as a pathway to Christ, not as an object to be worshiped. Treharne writes that '[t]he poet deftly retains complete orthodoxy by inscribing the sufferings of Christ onto the Cross: the Cross speaks of its pain, its torment, not of that belonging to Christ himself.'[38] Adopting prosopopeia through the speech of the cross, the poet demonstrates the object's agency over its choice to bear Christ.

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[37] Treharne, *Old and Middle English, c.890-c.1450,* p. 124. 'Now I urge you, my beloved man, / that you tell men about this vision: / reveal with words that is the tree of glory / on which almighty God suffered / for mankind's many sins / and Adam's ancient deeds.'
[38] Ibid., p. 120.

Ascribing both an agency and a voice to the cross continues to be popular throughout the later Middle Ages, and can be seen in the Middle English lyric, 'A Dispute Between Mary and the Cross,' extant in the fifteenth-century Vernon MS (c. 1400).[39] In the text, the voice of the cross responds to Mary's complaints by defending its agency in the narrative of the Passion: 'I . was þat cheef chargeour, / I . bar flesch . for folkes feste […] On me lay . þe lomb of loue, / I . was plater . his bodi a-boue' [ll. 165-171][40]. Again, the cross is 'cheef chargour,' the bearer of sins and of Christ. This text, with its graphic imaginings of Christ's suffering becomes an active agent in the crucifixion story. These two poems demonstrate the ability of the *arma* to illicit a particular reader response. Here, the representations of objects in text are given agency in the crucifixion narrative, and use their voice to highlight the suffering of Christ, seeking a penitential and affective response.

While acknowledging the potential of the *arma* to act as relic, the usage in 'A Dispute' does not incite a defensive reading. As Gayk has noted, the *arma* demand different readings 'determined by their textual and material contexts: found on a birth girdle, the *arma* function amuletically, protecting against bodily harm; found with an indulgence, they can protect against divine judgement, found with devotional lyrics, they are meditative and penitential.'[41] It is only by understanding the affective use of the *arma Christi* in lyric poetry such as 'A Dispute' that one can begin to unpack how the *arma* elsewhere shaped defensive reading. Both encourage the reader to understand the

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[39] Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Poet. A 1.
[40] Richard Morris, *Legends of the Holy Rood; Symbols of the Passion and Cross-Poems.* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), 'Dispute between Mary and the Cross,' pp. 136-7.
[41] Shannon Gayk, 'Early Modern Afterlives of the *Arma Christi*,' in Cooper and Denny-Brown, *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture,* p. 275.

representations of the *arma* in text and image as materially powerful relics, but, as we will see, 'O Vernicle' draws from an aligned tradition of collecting relics and saints, and viewing the *arma* as Christ's heraldry to encourage a defensive reading of the text.[42]

Arma Christi as Heraldic Symbol

St Paul calls upon the Ephesians to take 'the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one' (Eph. 6:16). The shield – a recognizable object of literal and allegorical defensive armor. Following the IV Lateran Council of 1215, the *arma Christi* become increasingly associated with defensive shields. Flora Lewis has pointed to a clear incident in the early fourteenth century demonstrating the use of *arma* as shield:

> Franciscan Nicholas Bozon used the shield and horse in his version of the story as metaphors for the protection of the soul [...] Later in the fourteenth century we find the same idea of the *arma* placed as protection at the entrances to the house of the soul – and of the body – taken up by Henry of Lancaster in his *Livre de Syntz Medicines*, who describes how he must have 'cos armes de la greve passion ... si proprement purtraites sur mes portes': that is, on his ears, eyes, nose, mouth, hands, feet, and especially on the heart. With the entrances thus marked, the devil will not be brave enough to set foot inside.[43]

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[42] Ryan's observations are helpful here: 'The image of Christ as victorious military hero, which had appealed to early medieval warrior societies, encountered some difficulty in the later Middle Ages with its increasing emphasis on a tortured and bloody Christ on the cross. How could one stress Christ's victory in the face of such stark iconography? The answer lay, partly, in the arming of the warrior.' Ryan, 'Weapons of Redemption,' in Henning Laugerud and Laura Katrine Skinnebach, *Instruments of Devotion: The Practices and Objects of Religious Piety from the Late Middle Ages to the 20th Century* (Aarhus; Lancaster: Aarhus University Press ; White Cross Mills, 2007), p. 119.

[43] Flora Lewis, 'The Wound in Christ's Side' in Lesley Smith and Jane H. M. Taylor, *Women and the Book: Assessing the Visual Evidence*, British Library Studies in Medieval Culture (London : Toronto: British Library ; University of Toronto Press, 1997), p. 218.

Marking the location both of Christ's wounds, and the sites of sensation, here the *arma* are specifically identified as protective shields to repel a devilish threat.

Shields were more than defensive objects to be used on the battlefield, they were also the means by which individuals identified themselves, their family, and their loyalties. As symbols of Christ's triumph, it was not long before the *arma Christi* came to be viewed as heraldic. Heraldry, simply put by Wollaston, is 'primarily to distinguish a person by means of symbols clearly recognisable.'[44] Adrian Ailes writes of aristocratic and royal heraldry from the twelfth century onwards that '[c]ommon was the use of arms and badges to stress royal control, administration and dominion.'[45] The *arma* represented on shields are functioning in the way Wollaston and Aile describe – they distinguish that these are Christ's arms, and they represent the subject's loyalty to their lord, in this case, Christ. The image of Christ's coat

Figure 5 Arma Christi shield with Tau cross and nails - St Mary's and All Saints' Church, Willingham, Cambridgeshire. Image credit: personal photo.

[44] Gerald W. Wollaston, "Heraldry," *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 81, no. 4198 (1933): 574–86, p. 574.
[45] Adrian Ailes, 'Heraldry in Medieval England', in Peter R Coss and Maurice Keen, *Heraldry, Pageantry, and Social Display in Medieval England* (Woodbridge, Suffolk; Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2002), p. 85.

of arms not only depicts Christ's subjects' loyalty in fighting *for* Christ by bearing his arms, but also indicate that Christ is fighting *for* the devout.

Fourteenth-century wall paintings of the *arma Christi* painted within shields or crests are seen on the walls of St Mary's Church in Willingham, Cambridgeshire. A crown of thorns is depicted within one, and a tau cross and nails in another (Figure 5). A further shield contains the sacred heart and Christ's hands and feet, each marked by wounds. The *arma* are devotional images in their own right, and there is no accompanying image of Christ. The three shields are placed along one wall separated by arches. They serve a memorial function, perhaps as Gregory the Great's 'layman's books,' and direct any mental wanderings back to the crucifixion.[46] The *arma* in the image are not eliciting an affective response (there is no graphic rendering of the crucifixion), rather they serve as apotropaic symbols.

Protecting the bodies and souls of the deceased was big business in the later Middle Ages and, as perceptions of Purgatory became more developed, the belief in indulgences and other rituals to guide an individual in the afterlife flourished. The *arma Christi* were, in general, a means of protecting the soul and body, but their apotropaic quality is particularly emphasized in their appearance on tombs. Writing of tombs in Ireland, Salvador Ryan writes that '[t]he association of the *arma Christi* with death and judgment becomes much clearer from the fifteenth century with the arrival of carvings of

[46] Gregory the Great had endorsed the idea that meaning was conveyed in image to layman in the sixth century. Gyorgy E Szonyi writes,'Pope Gregory the Great had established the thesis that images are layman's books. This was paraphrased by John of Damascus as follows: "An image is to the illiterate what a book is to the literate, and what the word is to hearing, the image is to sight."' Gyorgy E Szonyi 'Poststructuralist Iconology' in W.J.T. Mitchell's Image Theory : Living Pictures (New York: Routledge, 2017). p. 72.

the instruments of the Passion on mostly Anglo-Norman tombstones of [...] in which cases they are included with a personal coat of arms.'[47] Christ's 'coat of arms' (the actual 'arms' of his death), are placed alongside the arms of the tomb's owner. This pairing may inspire a variety of responses: to establish Christ's status as protector in death; to remind visitors to the tomb of Christ's sacrifice and thereby inspire thanksgiving; to raise the status of the entombed by displaying Christ as an ally in the spiritual battle; or to use Christ's arms as amulet to protect the soul in Purgatory and help it on its way to heaven. While it seems likely that all these were true to some degree, their placement on shields as Christ's coat of arms connect the instruments of Christ's Passion with ideals of genealogical militarism. The use of *arma* as a symbol of protection also finds its way onto actual banners and armor (see, for example, the cross emblazoned across the banners of the Knights Templar). Adding the endorsement of Christ for military endeavors was a means to embrace the symbolic power of the *arma* as protective.

The same is true of 'The Dream of the Rood,' in which the speaker calls upon the cross for protection: 'Me is willa to ðam / mycel on mode, ond min *mundbyrd* is / geriht to þære rode' (ll. 129b-131a, *my emphasis*).[48] The choice of 'mundbyrd' ('protection, patronage, aid', Bosworth-Toller)[49] carries implications for representing this protection as feudal or, at least, as social. Out of 67 occurances of 'mundbyrd' in the *Old English Corpus*, ten arise from the Law Codes, and find their meanings clustered around the

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[47] Ryan, 'The *Arma Christi* in Medieval and Early Modern Ireland,' in Cooper and Denny-Brown, *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture*, p. 251.
[48] Elaine M Treharne, *Old and Middle English, c.890-c.1450: an anthology* (Chichester, West Sussex; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p. 114. 'My desire for that is great in my mind, and my hope of protection is directed to the cross.'
[49] "Mund-byrd." Bosworth, Joseph. "An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online." March 21, 2010. http://www.bosworthtoller.com/023216. Accessed November 22, 2017.

words for kings, ealdormans, ceorles, bishops, and archbishops.[50] The sense in the *Dream of the Rood* is that the speaker offers protection from the cross as a peasant might seek physical, economic, and social protection from their lord.

The tradition of defensive spirituality described in Ephesians, and enacted by saints recognized as *miles Christi*, defined the Christian spiritual experience as one that was embattled - the soul was constantly under siege from the devil. The *arma Christi* appear in such a wide variety of forms and speak to the breadth of reading practice in the later Middle Ages. As relic or heraldic symbol, the *arma* demonstrate popular forms of reading in the period c. 1250-1500, sometimes penitential, sometimes affective, and sometimes defensive, and sometimes all three. As relics (and representations of relics), the *arma* can protect the body from spiritual attack, and even perform miracles against physical suffering. As heraldic symbols, they authorize the representation of Jesus as *miles Christi* by granting him a genealogy defined through the Passion, and they literalize the notion of Christ's suffering as a 'shield' against temptation and sin.

The Textual Tradition of 'O Vernicle'

'O Vernicle' is an exceptional text; not only is the number of extant manuscripts significant (twenty in total), it is the only Middle English lyric to be consistently copied and illustrated in roll format (ten of the twenty manuscripts are rolls). Furthermore,

[50] "mundbyrd" *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus*, compiled by Antonette diPaolo Healey with John Price Wilkin and Xin Xiang. Mundbyrd. (Toronto: Dictionary of Old English Project 2009). http://tapor.library.utoronto.ca/doecorpus/. Accessed November 22, 2017.

eighteen of the twenty manuscripts contain illustrations of the *arma Christi*. The recent work of Ann Eljenholm Nichols, in publishing the only critical edition of the poem, has done much to illuminate the complex relationships between the 'O Vernicle' manuscripts and versions.[51] Tracing the textual transmission of the manuscripts, Nichols identifies two main families (I and II), both with witnesses dating back to c. 1400. Nichol's stemma is shown in Figure 10 (found in *'O Vernicle' Stemmatics*, where the transmission history is discussed in further detail). Appendix 1 shows the sigla and dates for each 'O Vernicle' witness. The earliest manuscript dates to c. 1400 (E) and is Nichols' base text, and the remaining witnesses date throughout the fifteenth century. A 1523 printed edition by Richard Fakes as *A gloryous medytacyon of Ihesus crystes passyon* (STC 14550, ESTC S119432) also survives.[52] Continuing in the tradition of the *arma Christi* rolls, this early printed book is illustrated with woodcut prints of the *arma Christi*, each within a bordered block, allowing for the images to be treated for their amuletic potential.

'O Vernicle' is frequently copied alongside other texts, here called 'partner texts.' These texts have largely been left out of scholarly discussion, perhaps because in every roll witness, 'O Vernicle,' as the only illustrated text, and the longest, is prioritized. The major partner texts include: an indulgence for devotion to the *arma Christi* (DIMEV 5196), which appears in six witnesses with 'O Vernicle' (E, Hd, R, B, H1, L); a prayer of thanksgiving for the redemption (DIMEV 2290), which survives alongside 'O Vernicle'

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[51] Ann Eljenholm Nichols, 'A Critical Edition of "O Vernicle",' in *Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture : With a Critical Edition of "O Vernicle"* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).

[52] *A Gloryous Medytacyon of Ihesus Crystes Passyon* ([London: Imprynted by me Rychard Fakes dwellynge in Dura[m] Rent, or ells in Poules by the yearde at the sygne, of the. ABC, 1523). See microfilm reproduction of the Bodleian Library's copy via EEBO at: http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:20068:8

in nine manuscripts (E, Hd, Ii, R, A3, B, Q, H1, L); and a meditation on the Passion (DIMEV 2915), which occurs in four 'O Vernicle' witnesses (C2, P, H1, L). These textual groupings form a system of devotional reading, offering a more comprehensive devotional program to care for the individual's spiritual wellbeing. While the prayer of thanksgiving and the meditation on the Passion fulfil the requirements of a contemplative, affective reading responses, the indulgence for devotion to the *arma Christi* and 'O Vernicle' offer to protect and defend the penitent reader.

There are two published editions of 'O Vernicle,' the most recent and most thorough being the critical edition by Ann Eljenholm Nichols in the 2014 volume, *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture.*[53] This edition is thorough in its stemmatic evaluation of the tradition, the descriptions of all the extant manuscripts, and the presentation of a base-text (E, a roll dating to c. 1400, from Family I) with significant variants. However, Nichols, as well as the other contributors to this volume, ignore the partner texts. Richard Morris published a side-by-side edition of 'O Vernicle' from two manuscripts (R - a codex dating between 1400-1420 from Family I, and A2, a roll dating between 1420-1430 from Family II), along with crude representations of the manuscript illustrations.[54] Morris pays some attention to the partner texts, and includes both the prayer of thanksgiving for the redemption (DIMEV 2290) and the indulgence for *arma Christi* devotions (DIMEV 5196) in his edition.[55]

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[53] Nichols, 'O Vernicle' in Cooper and Denny-Brown, *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture*.
[54] Richard Morris, *Legends of the Holy Rood; Symbols of the Passion and Cross-Poems.*
[55] Morris certainly provides a more comprehensive picture of the 'O Vernicle' tradition, but also fails to provide any explanation for his choice of *selected* partner texts or draw attention between these texts or the tradition from which they arise.

While there were plenty of other devotional Passion poems circulating in the fifteenth century, none display the unusual codicological, illustrative, or compilative character of 'O Vernicle.' The pervasive uniqueness of 'O Vernicle,' in both form and function, was possibly part of the original intended purpose of both the poem, and devotion to the *arma Christi* more generally. Nichols writes that '[i]f the original copy was a roll, as I believe it was, it indicates yet further innovation at the source: a format normally used for official documents was adapted to facilitate penitential meditation.'[56] Indeed, the rolls were penitential, but here I argue that they were primarily defensive. Defensive reading practice is not isolated from other contemporary reading practices, including contemplative and meditative reading. The partner texts provide a more holistic devotional program that calls upon readers to read in order to protect their body and soul.

Rolls for Reading

'O Vernicle,' is a stanza-by-stanza guide to using the *arma Christi* to 'shield,' 'keep' and 'protect.' Accompanying each stanza are, in eighteen out of twenty total manuscripts, *arma Christi* illustrations. Ten of the twenty surviving witnesses of 'O Vernicle' are found in roll format. The short stanzas, each taking a different *arma* as its focus, accompanied by illustrations of the *arma Christi*, encourage a modulated reading style. The format of the text allows the reader to treat each section as an isolated unit, or textual shield. The roll format of ten out of the twenty surviving witnesses isolated each

[56] Nichols, 'O Vernicle,' in Cooper and Denny-Brown, *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture,* p. 178.

textual/ visual unit further, aligning this poem with other *arma Christi* traditions and rolls used for personal protection.

The roll format made the manuscript object portable and easy to use as amulet. Six of the roll witnesses to 'O Vernicle' contain the *arma Christi* poem alone (C1, M, A2, H2, O, S), while three rolls (E, A3, B) contain 'O Vernicle' alongside the partner prayer of thanksgiving for the redemption (DIMEV 2290). In both cases, 'O Vernicle' combines with a text that centers on contemplative passion that, when copied together in a roll, is suitable as amulet. One other roll (C2) contains 'O Vernicle' and another partner text, the Meditation on the Passion (DIMEV 2915). Contemplative devotion goes hand in hand with amuletic use, indeed, the act of contemplation (either on a particular *arma* or on a prayer) can be defensive. The instruction is made all the clearer by the physical form of the manuscript itself, which, as a narrow roll, encourages private defensive reading, rather than public viewing. For many years, following the publication of Rossell Hope Robbins' 1939 article, 'The *Arma Christi* Rolls,' scholarship took entirely the opposite approach, believing that the rolls were intended for communal devotion.[57] The following section aims to set the 'O Vernicle' rolls within the context of medieval rolls more generally, and demonstrate that these particular rolls were of a form designed for private devotion and likely used as amulet.

Rolls served a variety of purposes in the Middle Ages. Some anticipated a degree of public presentation. The heraldic rolls and genealogies depended upon a continuous visual, and so were presented in rolls that may have been displayed. Others, like the

[57] Rossell Hope Robbins, "The '*Arma Christi*' Rolls," *The Modern Language Review* 34, no. 3 (1939): 415–21.

mortuary rolls, could be easily transported and added to, and were used to solicit prayers for the dead.[58] The exultet rolls were likely used in preaching. For example, London, British Library, MS Add. 30337, is an 'Exultet Roll' dating from c. 1075-80, with large column illustrations added in the reverse direction to the text so that a preacher could, 'unfurl the roll over the edge of the lectern, so that the illustrations would then become visible, right way up, to the congregation.'[59] The 'O Vernicle' rolls, on the other hand, are more comparable with rolls used for private prayer and ritual, such as birth girdles, indulgence rolls, or magic/ ritual rolls.

For many years, the 'O Vernicle' rolls were considered aids for public preaching like the exultet rolls. Rossell Hope Robbins argues that '[t]he original function of the "*Arma Christi*" was congregational. A friar or a priest would display such rolls, either holding them up himself, or hanging them from a convenient ledge or niche in the wall, or suspending them from the pulpit.'[60] This is a compelling image; one can easily envisage a preacher dramatically unfurling a roll from the top of the pulpit as he presents that day's sermon on the *arma.* Yet, there is one fundamental difficulty with this confident assertion - they are simply too small.[61] None of the ten surviving rolls exceed 200 mm in width. Indeed, only three of them exceed 150 mm in width. The average width of all ten rolls is a narrow 137.3 mm, barely wider than an average palm span. The

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[58] Lynda Rollason, "Medieval Mortuary Rolls: Prayers for the Dead and Travel in Medieval England," *Northern History* 48, no. 2 (September 2011): 187–223, p. 187.
[59] Clemens, *Introduction to Manuscript Studies*, p. 254. London, British Library, MS Add. 30337. See "exultet roll" at http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_30337, accessed June 21, 2017.
[60] Robbins, "The '*Arma Christi*' Rolls," p. 419-20.
[61] Compare, for example, to the exultet rolls. Every illustrated 'O Vernicle' rolls has its images in the same orientatation as the text. Furthmore, the BL Exultet Roll is significantly wider, and therefore more visible to a congregation, than even the widest 'O Vernicle' roll, measuring 790 x 290mm.

illustrations are, of course, correspondingly small – they are rarely larger than 150 x 100 mm. A viewer could not have carefully examined the images more than a few feet away. It is just not feasible to suggest that these diminutive rolls were viewed as part of a communal viewing experience.[62]

As part of his defense of congregational use, Rossell Hope Robbins writes that '[i]t is hardly to be supposed that an individual reader would take the trouble to unroll a long sheet every time he wished to pray or meditate […] Persons wishing to employ the '*Arma Christi*' for frequent use would have found it far more convenient to turn the pages of a small book.'[63] While these observations do not stand up to scrutiny for Robbin's intended argument of congregational use, they are nonetheless valuable. It is likely that the unfurling and reading of each roll was likely to have taken considerable effort. Looking at digitized versions of rolls feels linear and fluid; we can trace our eyes down the page as we scroll, barely pausing for breath. Some scholars, including Clemens and Graham, understand the reading of a physical roll in this way; '[t]he continuous narrative on a roll could be read uninterrupted, which was useful for public reading, proclamations, or in the theater.'[64] In support of this argument, they assert that '[t]he *Arma Christi* rolls were evidently aimed at those who could not read.'[65] Anyone who has tried to unfurl and read one of these *arma Christi* rolls would surely refute this claim.

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[62] Pamela Robinson agrees in her chapter 'The Format of Books - Books, Booklets, and Rolls', in Nigel J. Morgan et al., *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain* (Cambridge University Press, 1998). She writes, 'the extant rolls are not nearly large enough for their pictures to be seen at a distance,' p. 44.
[63] Robbins, "The '*Arma Christi*' Rolls," p. 416.
[64] Clemens, *Introduction to Manuscript Studies*, p. 250.
[65] Ibid., p. 254.

The length of the rolls ranges from approximately 765 mm to 2220mm, and the mean length of all ten rolls is 1520 mm (about 5 feet). This calculation excludes potentially lost membranes, meaning that several of the rolls may have been even longer. If, for instance, the average person can comfortably hold their arms about 600 mm (c. 2 ft) apart in the vertical, even the shortest of the 'O Vernicle' rolls (M) would be too long to hold completely unfurled. So, we can assume that these rolls were most likely either placed on a table for reading, or unfurled section by section. Considering that, even if someone owned a table large enough to support the longest roll of 2220mm (B), reading it would be cumbersome and impractical. It is much more likely that these rolls were read section by section. The systematic adjustment of the manuscript for reading section by section insists on pauses and interruptions, even modularity. Rather than disproving a personal reading, this modular form of reading, where each section is taken as a unit or 'module' is part of the intended function of 'O Vernicle,' allowing, even insisting, the reader ritualistically treat each *arma* as shield.[66] The process of reading these rolls was a physical one – as Rudy notes, '[t]o read the roll was to physically interact with it.'[67] The pauses created by the physical handling of the roll is echoed in the way the *arma Christi* illustrations divide up the text. Such reading practice, informed by the codicology and, as we will see, the content of the rolls demonstrates the collective principle of 'O Vernicle,' which allow each piece of *arma* to be added to the reader's arsenal of armor in a ritualistic performance of defense.

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[66] Furthermore, the accompanying prayer of thanksgiving in three manuscripts, and meditation on the Passion in one manuscript, suggest a much more intimate form of devotion than public preaching.

[67] Rudy, *Postcards on Parchment,* p.151.

If these rolls are not for public viewing, what then is the evidence that they are for reading, and specifically defensive reading? The use of rolls for defense was well established by the fifteenth century. Rudy notes that 'rolls had their own built-in context, which often combined words and images to produce small, easily transported entities.'[68] She goes on to note that '[c]ertain kinds of texts, such as amulets, were particularly well suited to roll form, since the materiality of the object lent itself to being pressed onto or wrapped round the body. In this way, miracle-working images and texts could come into direct contact with afflicted body parts.'[69] This can be seen in the example of a Middle Dutch roll dating to c. 1480-1500 that Rudy points to: The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS. 74 G 20. Here, the roll measuring 700 x 140 mm is filled with amuletic images dominating the page. The images in the 'O Vernicle' rolls do not dominate the text, but work in conjunction with it. They do not present themselves simply as amuletic representation of objects, but rather as text-image modules or compartments intended for defensive *reading*.

Illustrations of the *arma Christi* are particularly associated with rolls and appear alongside other signs and symbols clearly connected to an amuletic purpose. Edsall points to Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley Roll 26 as an example of an *arma Christi* amulet roll. Amongst the *arma,* Edsall notes that pentacles and magical signs occur frequently, and, '[l]engthwise on the face is an image of the three nails of the Crucifixion followed by an unreadable text, a list of divine names interspersed with crosses, the opening of the Gospel of John, and the *Pater Noster* in Greek letters.'[70] Bodley Rolls 26

[68] Ibid., p. 151.
[69] Ibid., p. 151.
[70] Edsall, "*Arma Christi* Rolls or Textual Amulets?," p. 201.

is designated in the Bodleian's *A Catalogue of Western Manuscripts at the Bodleian Libraries and Selected Oxford Colleges* as a '[m]agical roll, [w]ritten in blood (?).'[71] Rolls were evidently considered a popular form for gathering Christian symbols and images for magical protective uses, indeed amuletic ones. Other examples include Takamiya MS 56 and New Haven, Beinecke Library, MS 410, all of which contain *arma Christi* imagery used for amuletic purposes. The very indication of a roll form containing illustrations of the *arma* may have been enough to prompt amuletic use. The 'O Vernicle' rolls also prioritize text, however, and in doing so refine amuletic reading to encourage defensive *reading*.

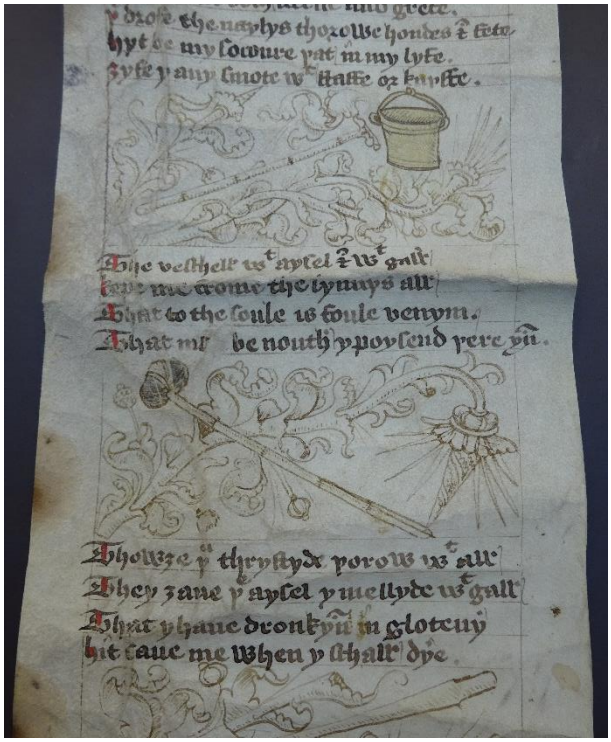

Figure 6 Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley Rolls 16 (C1). Stanzas for the Vessel with Gall and the Sponge. Image credit: personal photo.

The layout and content of the text in the manuscripts, and particularly in the rolls, enforces this method of reading further. Each stanza takes a particular *arma* as its subject, and, in several rolls, the accompanying image spaces the stanzas by placing the illustration in between the stanzas (so-called, 'column miniatures'). Of the roll witnesses, five contain column miniatures - C1, A2, H2, O, and S (see C1 in Figure 6). In these manuscripts,

[71] See *A Catalogue of Western Manuscripts at the Bodleian Libraries and Selected Oxford Colleges*, "Bodley Rolls 26." https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/manuscript_1940. Accessed November 2, 2017.

the illustrations interrupt the viewing experience; the image breaks up the text by extending horizontally across the text block, and it also mirrors the stanza's text block size. Furthermore, the images are placed ahead of their accompanying stanza, so the integration of the image forms an essential part of the reading experience. This attention to occupied space given to image and stanza demands viewers 'read' the image with the same consideration that they read the text. This reading practice, like the use of the *arma Christi* in iconography, mirrors the form of 'reading' a compartmentalized reliquary. The process of reading is one that itemizes each *arma* for individual devotional attention.

Figure 7 The Walters Art Museum, Accession no. 37.1159. Reliquary Tabernacle with Virgin and Child. Naddo Ceccarelli, c. 1350, Siena, Italy. Image credit: http://art.thewalters.org/detail/35007/reliquary-tabernacle-with-the-virgin-and-child/

Four other rolls contain marginal illustrations of the arma, drawn to the left of the text block, and to the approximate length of the written stanza (E, A3, B, C2). One other manuscript (M) has illustrations inset into the text block, within frames and on the left side of the text. In all these rolls except E, the arma appear in framed boxes, which isolate the individual arma and create a visual barrier. Again, the

compartmentalized, modular style of illustration visually imitates the appearance of a windowed reliquary box, such as The Walters Art Museum's 'Reliquary Tabernacle with the Virgin and Child' (c. 1350) by Naddo Ceccarelli (Figure 7).[72] Here, the depiction of the Virgin Mary is surrounded by thirty-four glass windows which reveal glimpses of saints' relics beneath. The relics are labeled with their supposed saintly origin, and together they visually frame the Mary and Child representation in the center. The *arma Christi*, in both a devotional and historic context, act as relics for Christ. They are the contact relics of the Passion as well as the weapons by which Christ was tortured, all combined in one concept. As such, they bridge the boundary between relics associated with the death of saint, often their garments, and the methods used to torture that saint, which are usually depicted in iconography. As we have already seen, particular arma were already considered the relics of Christ (the holy Cross, the crown of thorns, the Vernicle), and they became Christ's iconography too (seen in representations of Christ's shield on tombs). The reliquary is both iconographical (in a visual sense), and material (in that it offers an object capable of action). In the same way, the illustrations of the *arma* in framed marginal miniatures present the iconography of Christ as compartmentalized objects for veneration (see Figure 8). The rolls which display images in framed boxes at the edge of the manuscript are a type of visual reliquary. They demand the reader to view each object as though through a window, looking into the object of Christ's crucifixion.

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[72] "Reliquary Tabernacle with the Virgin and Child". Walters Art Museum catalogue. http://art.thewalters.org/detail/35007/reliquary-tabernacle-with-the-virgin-and-child/. Accessed May 6, 2017.

The presentation of the arma in B is particularly comparable to f. 15r of London, British Library, MS Royal 6.E.VI, already seen in Figure 4.[73] The filled and colored border bears resemblance to that of MS B, which are also filled and colored, in this instance alternating blue and red/brown (see Figure 8). A c. 1484 woodcut of the Man of Sorrows in a copy of *Directorium sacerdotum ad usum Sarum* printed by William Caxton (London, British Library, C.10.b.16) also might remind one of the compartmentalized arma of B and M. In this woodcut, the framed *arma Christi* surround the central figure of Christ rising from the tomb. The full-page woodcut immediately draws the eye to the face of Christ, represented as Man of Sorrows in a large central image. The central figure of Christ gazes down at the indulgence below, (now covered with a later note, perhaps late eighteenth-century, quoting Middleton's *The Origins of Printing*).[74] As Gayk has noted,

Figure 8 Edinburgh, Scottish Catholic Archives MS GB 0240 CB/57/9 (B). Crucifixion sequence. Image credit: Cooper and Denny-Brown (eds), The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture, Plate 3.6.

[73] This image was chosen as the cover illustration in Cooper and Denny-Brown, *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture*.

[74] The note reads, 'This is the only book printed in Latin by Caxton, and which is not mentioned in any Catalogue of his Works. It compiles Notion that has commonly obtained, that he confined himself to the printing of English. Dr Middleton's Dissertation - the Origins of Printing.' My transcription. The reference is to a printed book: *Dissertation concerning the origin of printing in England*, London: Printed for W. Bowyer and J. Nichols, at Cicero's Head, Red-Lion-Passage, Fleet-Street, MDCCLXXIV. [1774].

the vertical construction of the woodcut calls attention to the representation of Christ, whose face is represented on the vernicle in the top, central compartment, and whose face is kissed by Judas in the bottom, central compartment.[75] The lance and sponge are positioned either side of Christ in the main image, and are not reproduced again in the framed *arma Christi* borders, giving them a prominence over the other *arma* and perhaps connecting them with the wounds of Christ reproduced in the image, of hands and chest. The *arma* are positioned symmetrically around the central figure of Christ (with Christ's face at top and bottom center, and the pelican and rooster at top left and right-hand corners respectively). Clearly, consideration was taken in the construction of the arma. Yet, there is no narrative order presented in the border, in contrast to 'O Vernicle,' perhaps allowing the reader to meditate on the images individually in order of preference.

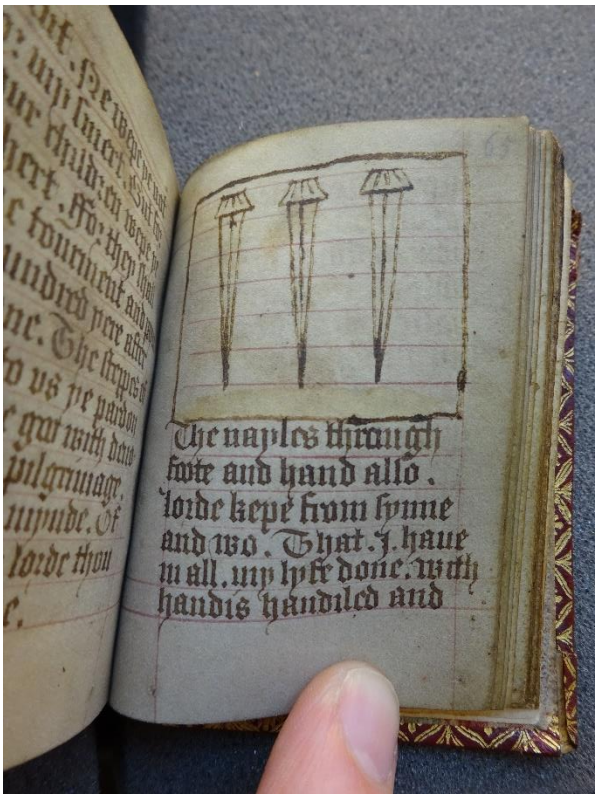

Figure 9 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 1 (D), f. 65r. Stanza for the nails. Image credit: personal photo.

The act of viewing, and particularly, with careful 'reading', with pause, and with due reverence, was a means of protecting the soul against persecution. The compartmentalization of *arma Christi* iconography in the 'O Vernicle'

[75] See Shannon Gayk, 'The Early Modern Afterlives of the *Arma Christi*,' in Cooper and Denny-Brown, *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture*, p. 282.

witnesses is designed to assist in this form of ritual and performative viewing ‘reading,’ and it is not specific to the rolls. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 1 (D) does likewise. A tiny devotional miscellany (approximately 77 x 61 mm) for personal use presents images of the *arma* in compartmentalized ‘boxes’ to accompany their relevant stanzas (see Figure 9). The modular presentation of the illustration isolates each image, indeed each *arma,* and encourages a compartmentalized reading process, one which takes each individual *arma* as a meditative unit and encourages the reader to pause over each illustration.

The framing of marginal illustrations and placement of column miniatures alongside text, as well as the physical roll format, all slow the reading process and demand thorough, meditative *reading* alongside the text, and not simply viewing. The layout, content, and format of the rolls all encourage the reader to take regular pauses, and, furthermore, no evidence exists that any of the rolls ever were attached to spindles to aid a continuous unfurling. Each stanza, and illustration, is read as an isolated unit, and the *arma Christi* become individual 'relics' of the Passion of Christ. The reading process is modular, reading like the isolated narrative *vitae* of the *SEL* we will see in Part II. Newhauser and Russell have identified the structural presentation of text and image in B (a roll with framed, marginal illustrations) as a type of 'virtual pilgrimage'. They write, '[i]n the images, the each user of the roll is witness to the events of the Passion; in the text, each user is told what all these events mean. And ultimately, the user in invited to participate in the scene in his or her own life.'[76] The roll form, which stimulates pause, is

[76] Newhauser and Russell, 'Mapping Virtual Pilgrimage', in Ibid., p. 108.

nonetheless linear in presentation and leads the reader from scene to scene in a particular order, as they are given opportunity to meditate on each scene.

The compartmentalized illustrations can be compared to the late fifteenth- to seventeenth-century phenomena of the Italian *Sacri Monti*. These 'mountains,' designed to mimic the hill of calvary, present isolated scenes from the Passion, frequently prompted by their related *arma Christi*, in individual chapels. The pilgrim visitors could visit and interact with the Passion narrative, as they progressed from chapel to chapel in chronological order. Isolating each incident, the *Sacri Monti* allow the visitor to become a participant in an imaginative recreation of Christ's crucifixion narrative. The late fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Sacro Monte di Varallo (one of nine surviving Italian *Sacri Monti*) demonstrates notable similarities with the 'O Vernicle' illustrations as it 'frames' the incidents of the Passion by forcing them to be viewed through windows, which direct the gaze toward a focal point, often a figure or an individual *arma*. Lasansky writes that '[t]he very act of looking through the screen forced one to focus on the religious tableau, excluding peripheral vision. By framing specific figures within each scene, the fixed viewpoints highlighted key moments within the mystery.'[77] Effectively, they functioned as sanctioned peepholes to enforce devotional performance, enclosing the *arma* within borders directs the reader into a particular scene. Notably, a representation of the veronica takes center stage in the Chapel of the Way of the Cross at Varallo, granting this 'contact relic' the center stage in this theater of Christ's Passion. Significantly, these chapels attest to the fact that representations, rather than 'real relics,'

[77] D. Medina Lasansky, 'Acting out the Passion at the Italian Sacri Monti' in Julia L. Hairston and Walter Stephens, *The Body in Early Modern Italy* (JHU Press, 2010), p. 260.

of the *arma Christi* were an authenticated means of seeking penance and performing devotion.[78]

Rolls for Ritual

The birth girdle examined by Morse – London, Wellcome Library MS 632, dated approximately to 1500 – attests to the use of rolls as amulets.[79] This roll employs representations of the *arma Christi* alongside instructions for how to use the girdle by wrapping it around the expectant mother's womb: 'And yf a woman travell wyth chylde gyrdes thys mesure abowte hyr wombe and she shall be safe delyvyrd wythowte parelle and the chyld shall have crystendome and the mother puryfycatyon.'[80] Here, not only is the intended amuletic purpose explicit, but the instructional charm is accompanied by images of the *arma Christi* and other prayers and invocations specifically to Saints Quiricus and Julitta, and to the Virgin Mary. The roll begins with three long nails pointing down, as though indicating where to start reading. A large Tau cross is depicted surrounded by *arma*. Further Christian signs and symbols, including I.H.S. monograms, crosses, and wounds, litter the rest of the roll as though imbued with magical efficacy. Here, the clear combination of signs, charms, prayers, invocations and visual cues reveal an obviously amuletic, protective purpose for women in labor. Morse notes that four out

[78] See 'Body Elision: Acting Out the Passion at the Italian *Sacri Monti'* in Ibid., p. 249.
[79] "London, Wellcome Library MS 632," *Wellcome Library Western Manuscripts and Archives Catalogue*, http://archives.wellcomelibrary.org/DServe/dserve.exe?dsqIni=Dserve.ini&dsqApp=Archive&dsqDb=Catalog&dsqCmd=show.tcl&dsqSearch=(RefNo==%27MS632%27). Accessed February 16, 2016.
[80] Ibid.

of five of her identified birth girdles contain *arma Christi* imagery, and she goes on to identify the arma as 'characteristic iconography for English birth girdles.'[81] Morse suggests several other rolls that may also have been birth girdles: New Haven, Beinecke Library MS 410; New York, Morgan Library, Glazier MS 39; London, British Library, MS Add. 88929; London, British Library, Rotulus Harley MS 43.A 14 and Rotulus Harley MS T.11.[82] Seven of the ten extant 'O Vernicle' rolls date to the middle or second half of the fifteenth century, within 0-50 years of the Wellcome birth girdle. This provides clear evidence that some rolls were used as amulets in the fifteenth century.

Edsall has suggested that MS E (the Esopus Roll), was also a birth girdle, mainly due to the inclusion of the Middle English prayer to Quiricus and Julitta, 'O Deus qui gloriosis martiribus,' alongside 'O Vernicle,' the *arma Christi* indulgence, and the prayer of Bede.[83] The text also contains a Tetragrammaton-Agla (a notarikon to signal a charm praising God), and seven crosses presumably used for amuletic purposes. It is important to remember the sign of the cross, drawn with the hand over one's own body was a common protective ritual. Edsall writes that:

> even if the verdict on the Esopus Roll [E] were to come down on the side of its not being a birth girdle, its contents clearly align it with the ancient, widespread, and often Church-sanctioned tradition of amulets containing Christian charms for healing and for all kinds of protection, such as from sudden death, death in childbirth, the

[81] Morse, 'Alongside St Margaret', in Emma Cayley, *Manuscripts and Printed Books in Europe, 1350-1550: Packaging, Presentation and Consumption*, Exeter Studies in Medieval Europe (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), p. 199. See also, Morse, 'Takamiya 56 and the English Birth Girdle Tradition', in Simon Horobin, Linne Mooney, and Timothy Graham, *Middle English Texts in Transition: A Festschrift Dedicated to Toshiyuki Takamiya on His 70th Birthday*, 2014.
[82] Morse, 'Alongside St Margaret, in Cayley, *Manuscripts and Printed Books in Europe, 1350-1550*, pp. 194-5.
[83] See Edsall, "Arma Christi Rolls or Textual Amulets?"

> malevolence of enemies and of the devil, and the dangers of travel and extreme weather.[84]

While the illustrations frequently gain agency as pictoral relics, the contents of E make its amuletic purpose clear. The text of 'O Vernicle' combined with the spiritual power of the *arma Christi* iconography show the potential of the witnesses to act as amulet and charm.

Roll amulets invoking Christ and Mary as protective intercessors, alongside pictoral charms and incantations, prevail long after the 'O Vernicle' rolls too, with Ethiopian 'magic scrolls' copied into the eighteenth century. One roll from Ethiopia – Ithaca, Kroch Library, 4600 Bd. MS 651 – is described as a '[v]ellum Ethopian magic scroll containing a fragment of the New Testament and a prayer to the Blessed Virgin, housed together with its original metal container.'[85] Rolls were further combined with obvious orthodox intention in indulgence rolls, often in combination with *arma Christi* imagery. Take, for example, the indulgence roll; New Haven, Beinecke Library, MS 410 (c. 1475-1500), where the *arma Christi* imagery is combined with detailed representations of Christ to enable penance to be pro-actively performed and indulged through performative reading.

Many of the surviving rolls containing Middle English invoke signs and charms for an amuletic purpose, however all 'O Vernicle' rolls except E lack the obviously 'magical' components seen in some rolls, of pentacles and charms. However, Edsall notes:

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[84] Ibid., p. 183-4. Edsall goes on to say that the, 'language is consistent with that of apotropaic prayers and charms, and the *arma* depicted in the series of imagetexts are presented as having power in and of themselves, functioning almost like pictorial relics; for the quasi-incantatory stanzas continually invoke the arma for protection from sin, demons, and the consequences of sin,' p. 187.

[85] Personal email correspondance with Frederika Louise Loew (Kroch Rare Books Library staff member), dated 15/3/2016.

> In the end, the constellation of narrow roll format as material support, the *arma Christi* imagery, and the occasional presence of apotropaic indulgences and other petitions for divine protection are fairly clear indicators that most of the "O Vernicle" rolls could have just as easily been seen as textual amulets for warding off dangers, physical and spiritual, as they were primarily devotional.[86]

I argue rolls are both amuletic and ritualistic as well as devotional. Indeed, the texts and images offered a form of devotional reading that was considered to protect the soul and body from spiritual and physical attacks – 'defensive reading.' Here, combining *arma Christi* imagery as part of a complex devotional program that embraced the ritualistic nature of reading and viewing and put it into conversation with other devotional texts. 'O Vernicle' took the most orthodox and popular literary devotional topic, the Passion of Christ, and tied it together with representations of the *arma Christi*, seeking to adopt the agency of relics and amulets. Of explicit textual amulets (like the invocations of Wellcome Library MS 632) , Skemer writes that '[e]ven when clerics prepared textual amulets from scripture and mainstrem Christian elements, characteristic writing formats made it possible to exploit and enhance the inherent power of sacred words and give them new meanings and functions.'[87] As will be demonstrated with the text of 'O Vernicle,' it is the combination of text and image, as well as partner texts, in both rolls and codices, that gives these witnesses their unique protective quality. The belief in the protective qualities of pseudo-magical amulets was easily incorporated into the ritualistic nature of late medieval Christianity. There is nothing inherently magical about the 'O Vernicle' rolls except for the potential usage. Just as relics gained amulet effect as they

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[86] Edsall, "*Arma Christi* Rolls or Textual Amulets?," p. 205.
[87] Skemer, *Binding Words : Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages*, p. 126.

could cure and protect, the images, text, and format of the rolls bestowed them with protective powers.

Rolls and Speech

The connection of rolls with speech further accentuates the ritualistic nature of their reading. When oral speech was visualized in the Middle Ages, it was as a roll. Time and time again, when words are visualized as spoken aloud in medieval manuscripts, they are written onto long, thin rolls or scrolls that seem to float suspended from the mouths of those who uttered them. They are so frequent, in fact, that they have their own name - these rolls of imagined speech are known as banderoles. Clemens and Graham note that '[e]vangelists, prophets, angels, and others are often depicted holding rolls or streamers, called *banderoles,* inscribed with the individual's name or a message,'[88] but they do not mention that these medieval 'speech bubbles' represent words spoken aloud. It is important to remember that, for people in the Middle Ages, reading was usually speaking. Many argue that silent reading was not common practice until the later twelfth and thirteenth century,[89] and prayers would have been spoken aloud. Certainly, the

[88] Clemens, *Introduction to Manuscript Studies*, pp. 252-4.
[89] Woolgar writes that 'Almost all reading at this date [c.1240] was reading aloud, perhaps *sotto* voce, but nonetheless with the intention that the words be pronounced. In monastic terms, there was little that separated reading from meditation, an activity requiring body and soul to participate – and the moral force that went with reading spiritual texts was of particular consequence,' Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*. Also, for a refinement of this discussion, see Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy : Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), who differentiates between private and silent reading, and points out that private reading is not necessarily private. And, Paul Henry Saenger, *Space between Words : The Origins of Silent Reading* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997), who argues for earlier instances of silent reading.

implication of *The Rule of St Benedict* implies that reading would be a disturbance to other monks during rest hours (‘aut forte qui voluerit legere sibi sic legat ut alium non inquiete; et agatur nona temperius mediante octava hora.’)[90] The very act of speaking was considered to give more efficacy to the prayers themselves.

As the five senses were often considered to require the most careful shielding and guarding, it is significant that speech was frequently treated as though it were a sense in the Middle Ages. In Part II ‘On the Senses’ of the thirteenth-century guide for anchoresses, *Ancrene Wisse,* the *Wisse*-author writes, ‘Spellunge ant smechunge beoð i muð baðe, as sihðe is i þe ehe; ah we schulen leten smechunge aþet we speoken of ower mete, ant speoken nu of spellunge, ant þrefter of herunge - of ba imeane sumchearre, as ha gað togederes.’[91] Perhaps because whatever was spoken was also heard, through the already accepted auditory sensory organ, it became more and more important to be conscious of speaking 'good,' rather than 'bad' speech.[92] Speech is used ritualistically to perform a defensive action, and indeed, ‘good’ speech had spiritual power in its own right.[93]

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[90] St Benedict, *The Rule of St. Benedict: In Latin and English*, ed. Luke Dysinger (Trabuco Canyon, Calif.: Source Books, 1997). Chap. 48. p. 112. ‘[O]r if anyone wishes to read to himself he may read, but without disturbing the others; and none is to be performed rather early at the middle of the eighth hour,’ p. 113.

[91] Millett, *Ancrene wisse*, p. 27 (II.11).

[92] For example, the *Ancrene Wisse* author instructs his readers to ‘Þis word seggeð eauer aþet ȝe beon al greiðe. (Þis word habbeð muchel on us, ant i muð ofte, euch time þet ȝe mahen, sitten ȝe oðer stonden),’ stressing the recital of the prayer. p. 7 (I:1). Going on, and engaging with the performance of prayers in front of the cross, the *Wisse*-author writes, ‘Þis ureisun biuore þe muchele rode is of muche strengðe,’ p. 13 (I:18). Ibid.

[93] Woolgar has noted that ‘The words of charms were only a part of the range of virtues that might be conveyed by, or associated with, text written on an object. Inscriptions could generate a power all of their own.’Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, p. 56.

A variety of textual items could be considered defensive, from blessings and sacraments, to indulgences, and charms. Skemer notes that '[h]ealing charms were most often "speech acts." Verbal charms were written down in codices as an aide-memoire for personal or communal reference and as a means of textual dissemination, and they could also be turned into textual amulets by being written down on a piece of parchment or paper and worn on the body.'[94] The act of speaking brings these static texts into the world of the spoken, lived experience, and grants agency to the speaker. As C. S. Watkins notes, '[t]he reading aloud of religious texts or even their physical presence was also thought to guard against misfortune.'[95] In correct speaking, and particularly in speaking words of defense, an individual can exert control, and defense, of their spiritual well-being.

Speech, then, was performative, and the act of verbalizing was a way to ritually perform a religious experience, whether devotional, penitential, affective, or defensive. Charms were textual amulets, meant to be spoken aloud in order to function effectively. Even physical gestures of defensiveness were supposed to be accompanied by penitential speech – see, for example, the *Wisse*-author's instruction: 'Hwen ȝe beoð al greiðe, sprengeð ow wið hali weater [...] and falleð adun þer-toward [the altar] wið þeose gretunges.'[96] Defensiveness is shown to be ritualistic and performative, engaging both with forms of sensing, acting, and reading.

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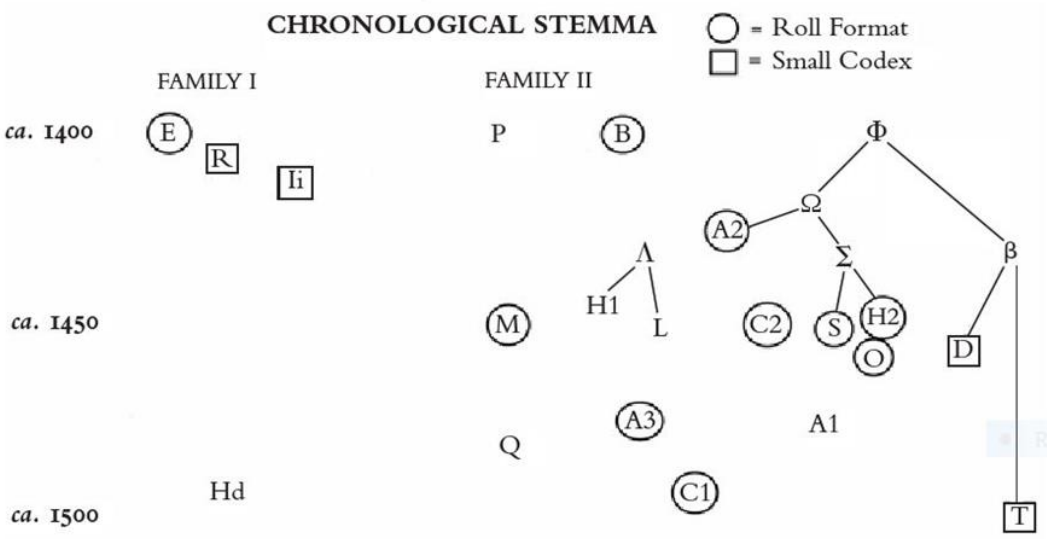
[94] Skemer, *Binding Words: Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages*, p. 9.
[95] Watkins, *History and the Supernatural in Medieval England*, p. 112.
[96] Millett, *Ancrene wisse*, p. 7 (I:1).

I have, in this section, demonstrated that the *arma Christi* were treated as relics of the Passion, and as heraldic symbols on a shield of Christ, giving them power as material objects. I have also shown that the roll format and arrangement of images was particularly adaptable for defensive use – for apotropaic devotion, and even as amulet. The connection of the roll format to visualized spoken speech[97] authenticates its contents (banderoles, after all, nearly always depict the words of authenticated figures such as saints or angels), and adds a sensory dimension to its performance. In reading of the tortures of Christ, and picturing the instruments of his Passion, the medieval reader is invited into a sensory participation with those events. Rolls were not simply objects designed for illiterate viewers of images or the 'poor man's book of hours'[98] as Woolf once remarked, rather they relied upon the combined efforts of the reader to meditate on the images, speak the words of 'O Vernicle' and partner texts, and engage in an act of reading that was physically and spiritually defensive.

[97] Astell also notes this in her essay, 'Retooling the Instruments of Christ's Passion,' in Cooper and Denny-Brown, *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture,* p. 187. 'Used to pray, rolls similarly symbolized spoken prayers,' although she does not elaborate.
[98] Rosemary Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 208.

'O Vernicle' Stemmatics



A Roman letter designates each manuscript, and a Greek letter represents the hypothetical genetic ancestor of a family of manuscripts. Since Greek sigla represent hypothetical exemplars, they cannot be dated. (See **Manuscripts** for more precise dating of the surviving individual manuscripts.) Lines indicate the assumed ancestral relationship: for example, Φ is the hypothetical exemplar for Ω and β; and β is the hypothetical exemplar for **D** and **T**. The broken line indicates that **O** is a copy of **H2**.

Figure 10 Nichols' Stemma of 'O Vernicle' manuscripts from ''O Vernicle': A Critical Edition' in Cooper and Denny-Brown, The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture. This version, with additional designations of roll or codex, from Edsall, 'Arma Christi' Rolls or Textual Amulets?' p. 180.

In the following section, I explore the textual history of 'O Vernicle,' as well as its relationship to its partner texts. The 'O Vernicle' witnesses are personal codices and rolls, intended for personal use. As such, they are highly individualized in order to serve their readers as textual objects of apotropaic protection. Perhaps because of this highly personalized nature, the textual history of 'O Vernicle' and its partner texts is concoluted. Despite this, within each textually related family of witnesses it is possible to trace forms of protection, illustrated through the format and production of their constituent manuscripts. Here, I am particularly interested in the ten roll witnesses, which were likely

created to encourage ritual apotropaic use through the format, presentation of text and image, and the compilation and arrangement of texts within the manuscripts. These rolls may even have been carried on the person for individual protective use as amulets. The most thorough stemmatic study of 'O Vernicle' to date is Nichols' 2014 critical edition, and the chronological stemma suggested by Nichols, and edited by Edsall, is replicated in Figure 10. Nichols identifies two textual families, I and II, the second is demonstrable in sixteen of the twenty extant witnesses.[99] Family I contains just four related manuscripts, all dating to the fifteenth century, with E, R and Ii dating 1400-1450, and Hd dating to 1470-1500. The members of Family II date throughout the fifteenth century, from c. 1400 (P and B) - c. 1500 (T). Manuscripts in roll format are found within both families of manuscripts.

Family I

To unpack Family I a little deeper, three of the witnesses are codices (R, Ii, and Hd), and one is a roll (E). Despite the variation in the obvious codicological and usage differences of these four witnesses - one a prayer roll (E), one a Book of Hours (Hd), and two religious miscellanies in Latin and English (Ii and R) – a common devotional purpose can be traced throughout. This purpose is, I argue, a performed defensiveness, inspired by the *selection* of texts and the usage of the *arma Christi* as symbols of spiritual weaponry. The particular combinations of accompanying text promote a devotional

[99] See Nichols in Cooper and Denny-Brown, *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture,* p. 318. 'In contrast to the meagre representation of of Family I, Family II proved remarkably fecund'.

agenda that can be unpacked through closer examination of the manuscripts in question. Manuscript E is a narrow roll (c. 1580 x 130mm) written in a formal Textualis script (Quadrata), and includes 24 colored marginal drawings of the *arma Christi*. Approximately 20-40 years later, a miniature of the annunciation was added at the beginning of the roll.[100] E, known as the Esopus roll, formed the base text for Nichol's critical edition and Edsall convincingly argues that the roll was considered amuletic.[101] Nichols perhaps understates the significance of the accompanying texts when she writes of E, that it 'comprises a typical anthology of Passion poems.'[102] In doing so, Nichols largely ignores the short verses that are added to the roll and shared across manuscripts including the indulgence for *arma Christi* devotions (also found in roll B, and codices Hd, R, H1 and L [DIMEV 5196]), and a prayer of thanksgiving for the redemption (found in rolls A3 and B, and codices Hd, Ii, R, Q, H1, and L [DIMEV 2290]). The presence of these texts demonstrates shared devotional usages across families and manuscript formats. As we examine the manuscripts in more detail, I show that these 'partner texts' play a part in the devotional agenda of many of these witnesses and deserve to be considered alongside 'O Vernicle' in future analysis and editions.

The other witnesses to Family I are all small codices, and contain texts for personal devotion. Two of them are illustrated, R and Hd, with illustrations of the *arma Christi* accompanying the text of 'O Vernicle.' Hd is a Book of Hours (235 x 155mm) of Sarum use in which 'O Vernicle' was seemingly added as part of the original purpose.[103]

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[100] See Nichols, in Ibid., p. 325.
[101] Edsall, "*Arma Christi* Rolls or Textual Amulets?"
[102] Nichols, in Cooper and Denny-Brown, *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture,* p. 325.
[103] Nichols, in Ibid., p. 326. 'The layout of the added poems matches that of the original Hours.'

Here, amongst the prayers consistent use in a Book of Hours, is the indulgence for *arma Christi* devotions and the prayer of thanksgiving for the redemption. It appears that the intended purpose of 'O Vernicle' for the redactor of Family I was tied up with a program of devotion to the *arma Christi* that includes an indulgence granting pardon, and a prayer expounding the sacrifice of Christ. All of these texts enforce the notion that the reader is actively embattled in a fight against sin and temptation.

R and Ii are miscellanies, both containing texts in Latin and English, most likely for a clerical or religious readership. MS Ii is small volume, 105 x 75 mm, and is an unillustrated document written in a later Anglicana script (the manuscript is dated to c. 1425). The Ii scribe gave special consideration to the presentation of 'O Vernicle' within the volume. This manuscript is the only member of Family I that does not include the indulgence for *arma Christi* devotions found in the other three Family I manuscripts. This manuscript displays other noteworthy features too, as the only Family I manuscript to be written in an Anglicana script, and containing other texts frequently found with 'O Vernicle' in Family II.[104] The poem frequently shares its parchment with 'The Fifteen O's,' which ritualizes measurements, and individual scribes pay attention to the presentation of the poem on the page. Nichols notes of Ii that:

> [t]he scribe accomplished the complex intercalation with "The Fifteen O's" by using an ingenious system for copying "O Vernicle." Four stanzas are freestanding, the first, last two, and the central *Vestiga*. The others are copied in tandem, two by two.[105]

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[104] Including Richard de Caistre's hymn (DIMEV 2869) and an Orison to the Virgin Mary from *Speculum Christiani* (DIMEV 3433).
[105] Nichols, in Cooper and Denny-Brown, *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture,* p. 327.

The scribe chose, or copied from an exempla, a structure containing fifteen sections, in which the Latin O's and the English *arma Chrsti* stanzas can be read together. The combined verses begin 'Incipit oracio hoc modo' (f. 103), instructing the reader to use the verses for prayer, and while the 'Fifteen O's' are penitential prayers to Christ in an affective mode, they are also concerned with the ritualistic benefits of prayer. In fact, the compiler was particularly engaged with notions of measurements and signifying numbers, and included a measure of the length of Christ ('The ly[ne] aboue fiftene tymye') as well as the collating 'O Vernicle' with the Latin 'Fifteen O's.' In doing so, the verses become visually emblematic of the O's, as the very shape and division of the text gains an amuletic visual quality. Other manuscripts attest to a defensive attention to aspects of copying in other manuscripts. Chicago, Newberry Library, MS 32 (c. 1400) is one such devotional roll that pays careful attention to layout. The roll contains five membranes, each of which, as Clemens notes, have 167 lines of text.[106] Notably, the manuscript also includes a depiction of Christ on the cross surrounded by the *arma Christi* and includes the Middle English text on 'The Stations of Rome.' Nearly everything associated with the production of a text object had the potential to gain defensive significance, from the writing of Christ's name, to the number of lines on a page. The combination of texts in these manuscripts points to an intended ritualistic defensive use, and attests to the existence of amuletic codices.

Finally, MS R, another small religious miscellany (160 x 120 mm), formed the basis for the 'O Vernicle' text printed by Morris in 1871. 'O Vernicle' is illustrated with 25 colored *arma Christi* drawings, framed within a double bar border, compartmentalizing

[106] Clemens, *Introduction to Manuscript Studies,* p. 254.

the *arma* as relics.[107] The volume contains witnesses for the now familiar indulgence and prayer of thanksgiving too, as well as the Latin 'Fifteen O's.' Furthermore, the volume attests to the presence of other 'O Vernicle' partner texts. An orison to the Virgin Mary in the *Speculum Christiani* appears ('Mary mother well thou be' DIMEV 3433) that is also found in MSS Ii of Family I, and H1 and L of Family II. The combined emphasis of these texts encourages an enactment of defensive devotion centered on protecting against temptations and guarding the senses, and is simultaneously affective and penitential. The shared commonality of the texts of Family I suggest that the partner texts were very much tied to the overall purpose of 'O Vernicle,' for both compilers and readers alike. The repeated presence of the partner texts and illustrations in three of the four Family I manuscripts is significant for the program of devotion that guides readers' engagement with the text. The other texts in this volume also encourage penitential devotion and a degree of 'guarding' against sin. They include *Sawles Warde* (in which the body is the battle ground for the attack of vices against the soul), and the prose Life of St Margaret (whereby the Margaret is attacked by numerous persecutors, including a male antagonist and the devil incarnate as dragon), as well as verses on careful speech ('O Lord God of comfort and care', DIMEV 3963), verses asking readers to pray for the scribe ('Who see this writ haveth I-read,' DIMEV 6558), and a moral warning against sin ('Thinken how swart thing and sooty is the sin,' DIMEV 5648). In all of the Family I manuscripts, compilers have presented a compilation of texts suitable for ritualistic, defensive devotion performed through the act of reading.

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[107] Nichols, in Cooper and Denny-Brown, *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture,* p. 328.

Family II

In terms of manuscript contents, there is a particularly close connection between Family I and the lambda stem of Family II (H1 and L). H1 and L, the two codices that make up the lambda stem of Family II, contain all the major partner texts - These arms of Crist,' the indulgence for *arma Christi* devotions (DIMEV 5196), the *Speculum Christiani* orison to the Virgin Mary (DIMEV 3433), a Meditation on the Passion (DIMEV 2915), Richard de Caistre's Hymn (DIMEV 2869), and 'O Vernicle.' Both manuscripts include the same texts, in the same order, and are written in a tidy Textualis script (Quadrata). They also date within approximately ten years of each other (H1: c. 1440; L: c. 1450). The volumes are deluxe compilations, with careful decoration and a variety of Middle English and Latin texts suitable for penitential and affective devotion, many of which indicate a dedication to Mary as protector and defender, alongside Christ. It is likely that both these volumes share a lost exemplum (the hypothetical lambda manuscript) that the scribes followed carefully. While little provenance information is known of L, it appears both small volumes (255 x 170 mm H1, 181 x 131 mm L) could have been used for private devotion and meditation.

The contents of H1 and L go beyond 'O Vernicle's' partner texts to include other texts that may have inspired a devotional reading conscious of the need to protect the soul and body. Both H1 and L contain a litany to the cross, God, the Trinity, the Virgin Mary, the saints, etc. ('Glorious cross that with the holy blood/ of Christ Jesu' DIMEV 1519). As already demonstrated, the cross (also an instrument of the Passion) is an established symbol for protection (both in ritual, allegory, and object). Similarly to the systematic

presentation of 'O Vernicle,' this litany of dedications allows the reader to offer prayers to each in turn, like the modular reading of ‘O Vernicle.’ Another text of meditations on the wounds as remedies against the deadly sins is also present in the volume and immediately precedes ‘O Vernicle’ (DIMEV 6744). The two volumes also contain two Middle English versions of ‘The Fifteen O's’ (DIMEV 3941 and 3947). One of these meditations, DIMEV 3941 ‘O Jesu Christ of everlasting sweetness,’ is also found in two prayer rolls which exclude ‘O Vernicle’ found in Columbia University Library in New York City - MS Plimpton 39 and MS Plimpton Addenda 4. Devotional texts focused on defensiveness crop up again and again in manuscripts attesting to different usages and audiences to such an extent that is seems certain that the notion of an embattled faith was deeply and indistinguishably embedded in lay and clerical Christianity throughout the later Middle Ages.

Phi, containing omega and beta, contains six of the Family II manuscripts according to Nichols' analysis. A2 is a direct descendant of omega, and S, H2, and O are descendants of the hypothetical sigma (from omega). Beta contains witnesses D (c. 1460) and T (c. 1500), two manuscripts that were recopied from, perhaps, a common exemplum approximately forty years apart. Both of these texts share a similar style of illustration – containing wash illustrations of the *arma* in framed column miniatures and a full-page illustration of Christ. Both volumes are compact, but D is tiny, measuring just 77 x 61mm (T is a slightly larger 121 x 91mm). The compactness of D perhaps explains why 'O Vernicle' was copied in prose in this volume, a point that Nichols has also noted.[108] While not seen in other 'O Vernicle' witnesses, they both share a corpus, and even contain some

[108] Nichols in Ibid., p. 344.

texts unique to these two manuscripts including 'O glorious god redeemer of mankind' (DIMEV 3908), a prayer to the *arma Christi*, and 'Of the blessed counselor Saint Roch' (DIMEV 4215), a Middle English couplet introducing a Latin prayer to Saint Roch, and a prayer to Mary, 'Blessed Mary Mother Virginal' (DIMEV 858). Both texts also contain prayers in Middle English introducing Latin prose prayers to Saints George and Sebastian (DIMEV 4204 and 4216). Prayers to saints make appropriate companions to 'O Vernicle' since the treatment of the *arma* is comparable to the saints. Both saints and the *arma* could be prayed to as a way of protecting and defending the soul. Similarly, a prayer to the five wounds, 'Gracious Lord for thy bitter passion' (DIMEV 1655), is intimately connected with the *arma*. Flora Lewis has previously noted that the:

> *arma Christi* and the wounds of Christ [...] are closely connected: both form important elements of Last-Judgement images, since both are signs of Christ's authority to judge; and more importantly, in their constant fragmentation and reassembling of the Passion narrative and the body of Christ, they epitomize the desire to encompass and anatomize the Passion.[109]

The wounds are significations of the Passion, just like the *arma Christi*, and gained amuletic qualities as they too were carved into shields, painted alongside the arma, and isolated into visual objects of devotion. Their connection here to 'O Vernicle' further attests to the compilor's efforts to create a defensive agenda.

With the exception of L and H1 of lambda (which contain all identified partner texts), there are fewer relationships and similarities in Family II than in I. However, there are still trends in copying and illustration that can be deemed significant. The majority of rolls exist in Family II. For example, all omega, and sigma mansucripts are rolls with

[109] Flora Lewis, 'The Wound in Christ's Side and the Instruments of the Passion' in Smith, Taylor, and British Library, *Women and the Book*, p. 204.

twenty-four colored illustrations of the arma each (A2, S, H2, O). In each the illustrations are also all column miniatures. Presenting the illustrations of the *arma* in compartmentalized column miniatures further stresses the *arma's* connection to relic devotion.

There is little evidence for the ownership of the 'O Vernicle' witnesses. Nichols' has identified ownership clues in five witnesses, four of which belong to Family II. Nichols writes:

> [u]nfortunately, there is little evidence of early ownership: one copy belonged to a priest (H1), one to a male recluse (P), one to a man not further identified (Q), two to individual women, Elynor Sybsay (A2) and Elizabeth Horne (Hd), and one to the Benedeictine nuns at Shaftsbury Abbey.[110]

She then goes on to note the wide spectrum of users:

> [t]he quality of illustration, which reflects cost, indicates that the people who commissioned these manuscripts came from a wide social spectrum, for the rolls range from exquisite to utilitarian.[111]

While this information is limited, we do know that 'O Vernicle' was not constricted to any one social group - it was used by a recluse, nuns, presumably secular women, and a priest. In each of these cases, whether used by religious of lay person, the purpose was devotional.

One witness (H1) does reveal an adaption of the text by an early owner who wrote themselves into the defensive narrative. An early owner of this witness was a priest by the name of Thomas Ware ('Pray for ser Thomas Ware prieste'). After his ownership, the the gender of the pronouns were changed from from masculine to feminine forms, as seen

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[110] Nichols in Cooper and Denny-Brown, *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture,* p. 320.
[111] Nichols in Ibid., p. 320

on on ff. 17v, 50, 54v. [112] Catalogue information suggests that this took place when the second scribe, a T. Werken, began his work in 1467.[113] It is likely the new owner, a woman, wanted to perform the penitence, devotion, and defense required of the manuscript, and this is made easier by the direct use of pronouns. Indeed, the very nature of 'O Vernicle' allowed this individualizing of the one protected by its emphatic reliance on pronouns. It is a work designed for the personal protection of its owner/ reader.

The number of shared texts and connections between the manuscripts containing 'O Vernicle,' suggests that the poem formed a focus for a devotional series that encouraged the ritual reading of texts for spiritual defense. Additional texts were frequently conjoined with 'O Vernicle' across families (and stemmatic branches within families), confirming a defensive program of *arma Christi* devotion. Furthermore, even though the text of 'O Vernicle' divides into two genetic families, the presentations of it do not descend with these textual connections – there are rolls and small codices in both families I and II. The frequent accompaniment of the *arma Christi* with verses offering indulgence, prayers, and thanksgiving, implies that the reader was supposed to 'do' something with 'O Vernicle.'[114] The action becomes clear when we look to the textual content of these texts, which guides the reader to enact the performance of penance as well as an affective remembering of Christ's Passion, both of which form part of the reader's defensive performance.

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[112] Nichols in Ibid., p. 320.
[113] San Marino, Huntingdon Library, MS HM 142, *Digital Scriptorium*, http://vm136.lib.berkeley.edu/BANC/digitalscriptorium/huntington/HM142.html. Accessed March 2017.
[114] See J. L. Austin for a theoretical discussion of how words can 'do things:' J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 2nd ed. / edited by J.O. Urmson and Marina Sbisà., Oxford Scholarship Online (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975).

2. Reading Redactions

'O Vernicle' compiles textual shields and iconographic shields to be received into the reader's mental treasury. Within the text are compartmentalized descriptions of each relic transformed into defensive allegorical armor for the reader.

> And take *myne armes* pryvely
> And do þam in *þi tresory*,
> In what stede sa þou dwelles,
> And, swete lemman, forget þow noght
> þat I þi lufe sa dere have brought,
> And I aske þe noght elles' (*my emphasis*).[1]

These lines conclude a love-lyric spoken from the perspective of Christ to his 'lemman swete' found in Cambridge, CUL Dd. 5. 64 III. Instructing the reader to 'take myne armes,' the voice of Christ calls upon the reader to keep them safe in the treasury where 'þou dwelles.' Rosemary Woolf points out that these lines make it clear that 'the climax and main point of the *exemplum* was always the treasuring of the blood-stained shirt or armour of the knight – allegorically the memory of the Passion.'[2] The *arma Christi* are these objects that act as relics and serve to remind the reader of the Passion. They are not simply for remembering, however, but also for collecting within the armory of the soul – for allegorically arming oneself with the transformed attributes of Christ.

In eighteen of the twenty surviving witnesses, illustrations also provide a visualization of these weapons and a stimulus for interior remembering. The structure of

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[1] Carleton Brown, *Religious Lyrics of the XIVth Century*, 2d. ed / rev. by G.V. Smithers. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), 78, p. 94, ll. 7-12.
[2] Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages*, p. 49.

the lyric supports such a reading. 'O Vernicle' consists of twenty-four stanzas, each dedicated to an individual instrument, and between four and eighteen lines. The *arma* vary from the most 'canonical' (for example, the crown of thorns, the pillar with the cord, the nails, the hammer, the vessel with gall, the sponge, the lance) to those lesser known, such as the footprints of the Savior when he went through the gate of Jerusalem, and the pelican. Most of the entries are short, with twelve four-line stanzas, and seven six-line stanzas. They are focused entries telling the role of each *arma Christi*, and adding a line for its usage – for example, the stanza for the thirty coins reads 'Vs schilde fro treson and couaytise' (l. 31). A few stanzas are longer and therefore more prominent - the Veronica stanza extends to fourteen lines, the pelican and the veil to eight, the footprints to eighteen, and the sepulcher to fourteen. There is a symmetry to the way in which these longer stanzas are positioned - the Vernicle begins the poem, the sepulcher ends it, and the footprints are the fourteenth stanza (approximately half way through the poem). The poet's attention to the structure of the poem is taken up codicologically by scribes and decorators who stress the visual layout of 'O Vernicle' and its partner texts (see the previous discussion of MS Ii, for example).

The poem's stress on the agency of the *arma Christi* as instruments with the power to grant forgiveness and protection to their devotees is assigned immediately in Family I manuscripts with the invocation to 'O Vernicle.' Immediately demanding something of the textual object, the invocation follows to, 'Schilde me fro all at in my life / I haf synned with wittes fyfe [...] Of synnes þat I haf i do / Lord of heuen, forgif it me / For þe figure þat I here se.' (ll. 7-8,12-14). The reader is encouraged to use the 'figure' (text and representation) to 'se' the *arma Christi* in the imagination in seeking defense

and forgiveness. Each *arma* offers to shield from a particular threat – whether the sins of the senses or the pains of hell. This is something that Rust has noted, and she writes that:

> "O Vernicle" elicits a third order to reckoning as well - reckoning as measuring and estimating - which works to intensify that meditation on the Passion, for by attributing to each Instrument the power to shield the devout against a specific spiritual peril - the crown of thorns protects against the "pyne of hell pitt pitte," the whips against sloth and idleness, and so on - the poem suggests the possibility of measuring the cost of human sin in itemized and calibrated units of Christ's suffering.[3]

The ritualization inherent in individual *arma* offering particular rewards is reflected in the codicological presentation of 'O Vernicle.'

The repeated use of 'shield' as a verb throughout 'O Vernicle,' and throughout different manuscript traditions, is significant. In E, the Vernicle is invoked to '*Shield* me fro all þat in my life / I haf synned with wittes fyfe' (ll. 7-8); the thirty coins to, 'Vs *schilde* fro treson and couaytise,' (l. 31); the crown of thorns to, '*Schild* me for pyne of hell pitte / Þat I haf deseruyd thorow uane witte' (ll. 71-72). The call for the *arma Christi* to act as shield in Family I are a vivid embodiment of Pauline armor, using figures of faith to protect the self from spiritual attack. Elsewhere, in Family I, there are protective calls to 'Kep me' or 'kepe me' (E: l. 106 to the vessel with gall, l. 55 to the veil before his eyes), 'safe me' (E: l. 112 to the sponge). The protective invocation of 'kepe me' also appears through Family II: l. 20 omega; l. 31 beta; l. 35 psi and A1; l. 39 psi ['keep thow me']; l. 55 all MSS; l. 71 beta; l. 98 psi; 1. 104 beta; l. 105. By playing an active role as shields and protectors from sin, in this instance from treachery and covetousness, the *arma* as viewed as apotropaic object (or image of object).

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[3] Martha Rust, 'The *Arma Christi* and the Ethics of Reckoning,' in Cooper and Denny-Brown, *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture,* pp. 144-5.

The *arma Christi* are literalized as armor and amulet so that even when the speaker is faced with physical threats, they are perceived to protect. In the hammer stanza, the poem reads, 'Hit be my soccour þat in my life/ If ony man I smote with staf or knyfe' (ll. 103-4). The weapon which 'drofe þe nayles thorow hand & fete' (l. 102) is transformed into armor able to be donned by the reader. While the phi branch changes the focus from the hammer to Christ ('Lord, be myn socowr in alle myn lyffe', l. 103), the physical threat does not change: omega and A3 read, 'Iffe ony man stryke me with staffe or knyffe,' and beta reads, 'And kepe me harmlesse fro swerde or knyfe.' Still a physical defense, here the hammer is transformed into symbols of Christ's victory as he turns them against enemies.

This is made even more explicit in the stanza on the lance that pierced Christ's side: 'Lord, þe scharpe spere i grounde / Þat in þine herte made a wound' (ll. 115-6). Here, the speaker wishes to adopt the lance as a weapon through which to connect to Christ's Passion, to invoke it as means to create a wound in imitation of Christ's suffering. In all instances, the weapons have been reclaimed from the enemy to be assistants in the fight against sin. The *arma Christi* become the means by which Christ can physically arm himself. Woolf's comments about the allegorizing effect of lyric are relevant here:

> It may well be that St. Paul's allegory of the 'armour of God' had some influence upon the minutely detailed descriptions of Christ's arming, and it may be noted that an allegory of knightly armour in terms of the virtues was very popular in the Middle Ages [...] This habit of allegorizing armour fitted well, of course, with the favourite set passages in romance, in which the arming of a knight was described.[4]

The notion of arming Christ is clearest in the *exemplum* of Christ as Lover-Knight. 'O Vernicle' does not present Christ as lover in the affective mode, but consolidates the

[4] Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages*, p. 53.

notion of Christ as knight. The reader becomes squire, ritually arming themselves with Christ's spiritual armor as represented through the *arma Christi.*

The vocabulary of Family I manuscripts, which specifically invoke the *arma* as objects with agency to defend, supports Edsall's theory that roll E, the only roll in Family I, was used as an amulet. The direct address to the *arma* in the text translates to a viewing of the images as 'imagetexts' that allow the viewer to 'read' the image as they might a text. In *Ancrene Wisse*, this kind of ritualistic use of the cross symbol is evident in the repeated instruction to make the sign of the cross. We know that the intention was for the reader to make this sign as they saw and interpreted the symbol, because the *Wisse*-author tells us so. Here, the drawing of an object can encourage the viewer to make the amuletic sign in seeking defense. The images are, generally speaking, representations of physical objects, yet even the representation can be seen to have amuletic qualities.

> Crux † fugat omne malum; Crux † est reparatio rerum;
> Per Crucis hoc signum † , fugiat procul omne malignum;
> Et, per idem signum † , saluetur quodque benignum;
> on ende, ow seolf ant o þe bedde baðe, *In nomine Patris et Filii.*[5]

The depiction of the cross is a prompt for the reader to make gesture. In 'O Vernicle' we see the illustrations utilized to prompt defensive reading. This may well have involved physically interacting with the manuscripts, whether by touching or kissing, or pressing it against an afflicted body part. Just as the visual representations of the cross which intersperse some prayers are made more efficacious by the simultaneous physical gesture

[5] Millett, *Ancrene wisse,* I.29, p. 19.

of making the sign of the cross, the *arma Christi* poem (or, perhaps more accurately, prayer), is made more effective by an accompanying gazing on the images of the *arma*.

The call to use the *arma Christi* for defensive action remains in place in all the manuscript witnesses, yet the apostrophe in the omega and beta branches of Family II manuscripts begins 'The Verncaul' and 'The veronycle' respectively. The shift from the vocative address of 'O' toward the Vernicle, to that of the definite article 'the,' changes the call to arms, and places more significance of the penitent's relationship to Christ. Nichols' observations of this linguistic shift, and its consequences, are worth noting. She writes:

> In Family II the supplication shifts from the *arma* to Christ himself, a modification found in the earliest witness of the second family (**B**). In branch [phi] of the same family, the opening vocative prayer at the end of each stanza is directed to Christ (*thou*) rather than to the Instruments of the Passion. Detached from the supplication as separate sentences or ass absolute constructions, the initial couplets merely describe the arma. The original syntax preserved in Family I, in contrast, is far more daring. The poet does not pray to the Savior, but to objects, for example, the knife of circumcision, and the robe of derision, which subsume the power to grant prayer through their contact with Christ's body.[6]

In Family I and some Family II manuscripts (particularly P, M, and Q), the *arma* become saint-like, able to intercede and protect on behalf of God, whereas in the psi manuscripts of Family II, they are more like relics, channels to the power of something greater. It is possible an increased awareness of the criticisms being levied toward object and image devotion by the Lollards and other critics of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century prompted the Family II redactor/s to adjust the text to readjust the power structures of the narrative.

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[6] Nichols in Cooper and Denny-Brown, *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture*, p. 319.

This shift is demonstrable throughout the poem, and the stanza for the knife of the circumcision in E (Family I) reads; ‘Þis knyf by tokeneth circumcision. / He destrude syne al and sum [...] / He be my socour when I schal dye’ (ll. 15-16, 20). As the stanza adds no additional subject, the ‘He’ in line 20 refers to the knife. The *arma Christi* almost become an extension of Christ as the objects are attributed powers to provide succor and the destruction of sins. In A3 and the omega manuscripts (A2, S, H2, O) ‘Lord’ is added as the subject in line 20: 'Lorde, kepe me tylle that I dye,' (omega) and 'Lord, be my sorowre whan I schal dye' (A3). The protective call is emphasized in the omega manuscripts with the call to ‘kepe me.’ While the stanza still calls upon the *arma,* the agent of protection here is Christ.

Manuscript E from Family I reads as follows for the sponge stanza:

> Þo þou thrusted sore with alle,
> Þai ȝeye þe aysell medeled with galle.
> Þat I haf dronke in glotony
> Hit safe me when I schale dye.
> *Þat, Lord, now I pray to þe*
> *For þat greuans þou suffirdest for me* (ll. 109-114, *my emphasis*).

In Family I, the sponge is that which can ‘safe me when I schale dye,’ and then then speaker transfers their attention to Christ, ‘*now* I pray to þe’ (ll. 112-13). It is specifically identified that the prayers to Christ are something separate from the devotions to the *arma*, indicating the *arma* (both their representations in text and image and their physical remains) were considered to have spiritual power. While most Family II manuscripts simply omit lines 113 and 114 (italicized), the phi redactor/s specifically redirects attention to Christ at the end of the stanza, and refocuses on forgiveness asking 'Loude,

forgyue me whan I dye' (beta MSS D and T) and 'Forgeue me, Lorde, ar [þat] I deye' (omega MSS A2, S, H2, O). In psi manuscripts, once the addressee of line 112 changes to the Lord, there is little necessity for the final two lines of the stanza as the addressee has already been redirected. Nonetheless, in all manuscripts, the sponge remains the way in which to access the protection and forgiveness of Christ.

Similarly, the stanza for the thirty coins in Family I reads:

> Þe pens also þat Iudas tolde
> Þer for Ihesu Crist was solde,
> *Vs schilde* fro treson and couaytise
> Þer in to dye in none wise (ll. 29-32, MS E).

Here, it is specifically 'Þe pens' that are invoked to 'schilde [us] fro treson.' In certain Family II manuscripts, line 30 (which invokes the coins as a shield) becomes 'Lorde, schylde me from treson and couetyse' in omega manuscripts (A2, S, H2, O) and 'Lord, kepe me fro treason & couetyse' in beta mansucripts (D, T). Both branches redirect the supplication to 'Lord,' rather than the 'pens.' Omega manuscripts retain the use of the verb 'schylde,' while the two beta manuscripts (D, T) drop it in favor of the, still protective, but less emphatic, 'kepe.' The redirection of the addressee to 'Lord' deprives the arma of some of their power - while they are still the emotional focus of the poem, they are no longer agents in the act of protection. Nichols does not expand on the potential reasons for this shift, but it is quite possible, I believe, that the choice was made by a redactor aware of potential accusations of idolatry.

The shift of addressee from the *arma Christi* in Family I to Christ in Family II is significant – it changes the agency of the *arma* from performing defense, to enabling

defense. However, Family II's emphasis on Christ does not detract from the poem's emphasis on defensive reading, and both traditions point to a defensive kind of prayer that assumes the power of a protectorant. In fact, Family II manuscripts, and the psi branch particularly, redact the text to stress the poem's 'shield me, keep me' message. Line 98 of the Nails stanza in E reads, 'Þei *help me* out of sinne and wo,' while the psi manuscripts write 'Lorde, *kepe me* owt of synne and woo.' Likewise, in the stanza on the hammer, line 104 in E 'If ony man I smote with staf or knyfe' is 'And *kepe me* harmlesse fro swerde or knyge' in beta (D, T). The object of 'keeping' refers to the 'Lord' added in l. 104 in all psi manuscripts.

Both beta manuscripts (D, T) contain 'O Vernicle' alongside prayers to SS George, Sebastian, Roch, as well as prayers to the *arma Christi* and the Virgin Mary. The beta manuscripts demonstrate the expanded defensiveness of the mid-thirteenth century onwards. In the beta tradition, those who bear the weapons against Christ are explicitly identified as Jews: 'Swerdis & battus þat þei bere' in E becomes 'Swerdes & battes the Iewes dyde bere' in D and T (l. 37). D and T heavily alter the stanza on the seamless tunic and the purple garment, adding four additional lines and, most significantly, changing 'Þe white cote þat had seme none' (E, l. 61) to 'The Iewes also kest lote / On they precious purple cote' (D, T, ll. 61-62). Here the anti-Semitism already weaving through 'O Vernicle' is further accentuated in the beta tradition.

Sins and the Senses

In the stanza of the vessel with gall, the speaker seeks to be saved from, ‘þe synnes alle / Þat to þe soule is foule uenym’ (ll. 106-7). Sin is the enemy of the soul, but worse, it can poison the unrepentant from the inside-out. The text goes on, ‘Þat myn be noght poysend þer ine’ (l. 108). This awareness of the interior and exterior forms of sin, is consistent with contemporary theories on the senses. In the opening Vernicle stanza, the reader is presented with warnings about the sins of the senses. Addressing the Vernicle, the speaker in the poem writes:

> Schilde me fro all þat in my life
> I haf synned with wittes fyfe,
> Namelich with mouth of sclaunderynge,
> Fals othes and bakbytyng
> And made bost with tong also
> Of synnes þat I haue I do (ll. 7-12).

The Vernicle, as witness to and relic of the Passion, is able to protect against these sins of speech. It is worth noting that speech is explicitly identified as a ‘wit’ (a sense), and the sins listed are those of speaking - of slander, of lying and backbiting, and boosting.[7] In the preceding lines, the speaker lists the sensory organs of Christ, which are made outward through the impression they leave upon the Vernicle; ‘þe cloth he sete to his face, / þe prent laft þer thorow his grace / His mouth, his nose, his eghen two, / Hi berde, his here dede al so’ (ll. 3-6). The imprint of Christ's mouth, nose, and eyes (even beard

[7] Woolgar writes that ‘Speech was enumerated as a sense, or presented in lists of bodily faculties in ways that suggest it was commonly interpreted as a sense, particularly at a popular level. This gave speech a special power, conveying not only the sense of words in terms of grammar and vocabulary; but also, beyond that, the moral or spiritual qualities that might be associated with the speaker or with the literal sense of the words. As well as the sense of words, other qualities would be conveyed to the listener, entering the body and spirit through his senses,’ Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, p. 104.

and hair) onto a piece of cloth inspires protection from the sins of speech. When written on a roll, as these lines are, they have particular efficacy. As we have seen, speech was after all frequently represented as a roll (a banderole), and the experience of unfurling an illustrated roll particularly engaged the readers' tactile senses.[8] As there is also precedent for the application of religious rolls to various body parts (as we saw with the birth girdles to be wrapped around the womb described by Morse),[9] one can imagine a reader taking this stanza as a prompt to touch the roll to their own sensory organs (mouth, eyes, nose, etc.).[10]

The roll, a textual object, becomes an amulet to protect the sinner. The efficacy was a result of the combined textual, visual, and codicological features. Here, the words of the vernicle and veil stanza encourage the viewer to identify their own sensory sin. The text acts as a charm to *keep* the viewer from sin. Astell argues that the presentation of the vernicle is as Word-made-flesh ('Having invoked the physical senses as metaphoric gates to be guarded, the speaker goes on to focus particularly on the mouth, in keeping with his implicit reading of the veronica as Word-made-flesh.')[11] Forgiveness is granted through the renunciation of false speech, and the stanza takes a penitential tone to admitting such sin. Astell writes that:

> [a]t the start of an extended meditation conducted through the serial conjoining of pictures and poetry, the renunciation of sins of the mouth thus purifies the one who

[8] Rudy speaks of the sensory experience of reading rolls in Rudy, "Kissing Images, Unfurling Rolls, Measuring Wounds, Sewing Badges and Carrying Talismans: Considering Some Harley Manuscripts through the Physical Rituals They Reveal."
[9] See Mary Morse, 'Alongside St Margaret,' in Cayley, *Manuscripts and Printed Books in Europe, 1350-1550*.
[10] Rudy discusses the implication of reader's interacting sensorially with their manuscripts in Rudy, "Kissing Images, Unfurling Rolls, Measuring Wounds, Sewing Badges and Carrying Talismans: Considering Some Harley Manuscripts through the Physical Rituals They Reveal."
[11] Astell, 'Retooling the Instruments of Christ's Passion,' in Ibid., p. 182.

> prays, who vocalizes the text on the roll, and who prepares thereby for oral, sacramental confession. Renouncing false words, the penitent becomes a true word, in likeness to the Word.[12]

The speaking of the poem was thereby an invocation of protective *arma*. This armor was embodied in the depictions not only of the *arma* but also of the body of Christ.

The 'fleshiness' of the picture created in the vernicle stanza is enhanced through the depiction of Christ's face which is presented, in many manuscripts, as embodied text. The emphasis on Christ's corporality in the veronica stanza comes across in the size and centrality of Christ's face in the accompanying illustrations. For example, in MS B, Christ's face fills the border of the compartmentalized image, and his halo extends into the border. At first glance, the vernicle is barely visible – shading represents the folds of cloth show the vernicle is presented behind, but one could easily assume this is simply the background to the image (other illustrations do all have a filled background). In this Family II manuscript, Christ's body provides a focal point for devotions. This becomes particularly significant when read alongside the final lines of the stanza, which call on the Lord to forgive the sins of the senses: 'Lord of heuen, forgif it me / For þe figure þat I here se' (l. 13-14). Good sensing – in this case, viewing the 'figure' of Christ in the correct way can grant forgiveness of sins.

As the poet leads the reader from *arma* to *arma,* each is designated with the agency to offer protection from sin, both generally and, in the references to the senses, more specifically. The stanza for the veil draws on similar sensory imagery to demonstrate that the contact relic of cloth, placed over the face and the sensory gateways

[12] Astell, 'Retooling the Instruments of Christ's Passion,' in Cooper and Denny-Brown, *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture,* p. 182.

of the mouth, nose, and eyes, acted as shield. Of the veil before Christ's eyes, the poems records that:

> Þe cloth before þin eghen two,
> To bobe þa þai knyt hit so.
> Hit kepe me fro uengans
> Of childhode and of ignorans
> And of all other synnes also
> Þat I haf with myn eghen dou
> And with nose smelled eke,
> Both hole and eke seke (ll.53-60).

Like the Vernicle stanza, the cloth that is placed over Christ's eyes acts to help purify the sins of the senses. This does not go unnoted by Astell, who writes that '[t]he relative length of stanza 9 (at eight lines, the forth longest in the series), its focus on a veiling cloth, and its references to sight and smell (two of the five wits) seems to have led the illustrator to associate its sense and image with that of the opening veronica.'[13] While much of 'O Vernicle' focuses on future sins, the sensory sins are those that have already taken place (the past participle is used) yet are also those to come. 'O Vernicle,' in its very form, offers readers an alternative to sinful senses - it provides edifying images to look at, words to read aloud (covering both hearing the 'sense' of speech), and a roll to handle and touch as part of the devotional experience. Just as the senses were considered gateways to the inner senses and the soul, the *arma* that were laid over Christ's face and head act as the gate keepers to sensory sins.

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[13] Astell, 'Retooling the Instruments of Christ's Passion,' in Ibid., p. 183.

As Nichols has identified, the stanza describing the crown of thorns connects the pain Christ felt in his head to 'sinners who misuse their 'heads' [wit].'[14] The text reads; 'Schild me fro pyne of hell pitte / Þat I haf deseruyd thorow uane witte' (ll. 71-71). The beta manuscripts, D and T, record these lines as, 'Lode, kepe me from payne of hell pytte, / Neuer to desrue it by mysspent wytte'. Considering that Nichols notes, '[t]he modifier *mysspent* commonly occurs in penitential literature with sins against the five wits,'[15] it is perhaps surprising that the 'witte' of the other manuscripts (except A2, H2, O) is not considered a reference to sensory sins. It seems that the poet, or at the very least the beta redactor, recognized the connection to the senses in these lines and read the crown as protecting against sensory sin. Comparing the description of hell's pit to *Ancrene Wisse,* however, we can see the language does not engage with such graphic detail: 'Heo is bitacned bi þeo þet vnwrið þe put. Þe put is hire feire neb, hire hwite swire, hire lichte echnen, [hire] hond, 3rf ha halt forð in his echȝe-[sihðe]. Ȝet beoð hire word put, bute ha beon þe bet iset.'[16] Here, the tone is distinctly penitential, the reader is invited to feel shame towards their own body. 'O Vernicle,' on the other hand, simply states that the penitent *is* sinful. The effect is not directly affective, but rather encourages a ritualistic and defensive reading of each *arma.*

Most of the 'O Vernicle' witnesses, and particularly the rolls, provide a means by which to divert the senses onto appropriate devotional subjects. They provide images of the *arma* for defensive arming, words for defensive speaking and hearing, and the object

[14] Nichols, 'O Vernicle' in Cooper and Denny-Brown, *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture*. Endnote 72, p. 385.
[15] Nichols, Ibid., p. 385.
[16] Millett, *Ancrene wisse*, II.8, p. 23.

for amuletic touching. The modular form of reading encouraged through the frequent use of column miniatures, tituli, and the layout of the poem in the rolls is supported by the content of the stanzas of 'O Vernicle,' which each deal with a separate sin in turn. Nichols writes, '[t]he poet uses the arma as focal points for serial consideration of personal sin to facilitate an examination of conscience for specific sins.'[17] Newhauser and Russell's arguments on the content of Blairs 9 (MS B), engage with the sensory capacity of the roll: 'Unlike a codex, the Blairs roll requires its reader/viewer to remain physically attached when engaged with it, making him or her an integral component of an experience that involved not only the visual, but also the tactile sense in the devotional and moral objectives of the roll.'[18] They suggest that the 'text/image complex of Blairs 9 within its moral and sensory contexts is designed to facilitate a virtual pilgrimage through the Stations of the Cross.'[19] This is convincing and, I think, not necessarily restricted to MS B alone. By imagining oneself into the Passion story, the poem becomes a performance of devotion to the *arma Christi*.

Partner Texts

The modular reading style supports the devotional performance, allowing each incident to be mediated upon before proceeding to the next. Engaging with the imaginative faculties is normally something associated with particularly affective texts.

[17] Nichols, 'The Footprints of Christ,' in Cooper and Denny-Brown, *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture*, p. 115.
[18] Newhauser and Russell, 'Mapping Virtual Pilgrimage' in Ibid., p. 81.
[19] Newhauser and Russell, Ibid., p. 82.

Throughout its critical history, ‘O Vernicle’ has largely been considered within the tradition of affective literature. However, Nichols has rightly pointed out that ‘[i]llustrated, as it is in eighteen copies, the poem might well have served as a guide for meditation, and a contemplative […] the poem itself, however, is not affective. Instead it belongs to the tradition of penitential literature.’[20] Agreeing with Nichols, Edsall writes that ‘[t]he findings here suggest only a slim likelihood that these imagetextobjects were designed for affective devotional practice, although an affective response is possible during any intense prayer no matter what the prompt may be.’[21] Indeed, the poem does not engage with graphic language of the crucifixion, and neither are the *arma Christi* presented in a particularly graphic way. Yet, they do appear alongside affective verses in the partner texts. Together, some manuscripts present a program of defensive reading that seeks *both* emotional imagination and protection.

The prayer of thanksgiving for the redemption ('I þank þe, Lord' DIMEV 2290) follows 'O Vernicle' in nine manuscripts (Ii, A3, L, R, B, Hd, H1, E, Q), and these nine make up all nine extant witnesses to the text. The prayer-poem puts an affective bent on the devotions to the *arma*, explicitly responding to the descriptions of the arma with affective images to match. In the rod and scourges stanza, 'O Vernicle' records, 'With ȝerdis grete þou was to gaschet / With scourges smart al to laschet' (ll. 65-66)[22] – while the language is graphic, with the rhyming couplets 'gaschet' and 'laschet' particularly striking, the image is not elaborate. The stanza quickly moves on in the next line to

[20] Nichols, in Ibid., pp. 115-6.
[21] Edsall, “*Arma Christi* Rolls or Textual Amulets?,” p. 205.
[22] Ann Eljenholm Nichols, ‘O Vernicle: A Critical Edition,’ in Cooper and Denny-Brown, *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture*. From hereafter, all quotations from ‘O Vernicle’ will be taken from this edition and line numbers acknowledged in the text.

address the sins the rod and scourges can address ('Þat payne me socour of synnes / Of clouth and of ydulness' ll. 67-68).

The prayer of thanksgiving adds affective imagery to the same scene, presenting a graphic imagining of Christ's bloodied body bound to a tree;

> Þi bodi was bonden to a tre,
> With scourges knit þe knot*is* grete
> Þi blessud bodi was all for-bete,
> On eu*er*i side turnud *and* torne (ll. 160-163).[23]

The prayer extends the image of Christ's body, adding a narrative and evocative dimension that encourages the reader to visualize and reflect on the horrors of the crucifixion, and of Christ's 'bete' (beaten) body. The meditations on the *arma* and Christ's tortures specifically enable the reader to seek forgiveness and salvation;

> Ȝese instrument*us* þat here p*er*tend beþ
> In memori of þi bittur deyt,
> Þey help us to oure sauacion
> For þey greuet þe ful sore
> Þin anguich wex so lenger þe more (ll. 179-184).

In this prayer, it is specifically the memorization of the arma, the mental recreation of Christ's crucifixion ('In memori') that allows the reader to seek salvation.[24] This mental

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[23] Morris, *Legends of the Holy Rood; Symbols of the Passion and Cross-Poems*, p. 194. All quotations from this text, and from 'These Arms of Christ' (An Indulgence for the *Arma Christi*, DIMEV 5196) are from this edition and line numbers will be given in the text. Note, Morris combines these two texts with 'O Vernicle' and the line numbers are combined, but there are no other separate editions.

[24] Here is an example of the phenomenon that Carruthurs calls ‘The Memory Image.’ See Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, especially pp. 57-60.

re-creation and the resultant pentitential suffering is very much in line with the affective tradition.

While not exclusively found in ‘O Vernicle’ manuscripts, ‘An Orison to the Virgin Mary’ in the *Speculum Christiani* (*Octaua Tabula*) (DIMEV 3433) and ‘An Orison on the Passion’ (DIMEV 2915) both occur in ‘O Vernicle’ manuscripts more than once, and support a reading agenda that is both defensive and devotional. ‘An Orison to the Virgin Mary’ (‘Mary Modor, wele þou be’), found in MSS Ii, R, H1 and L, specifically calls to be shielded from sins, in a comparable way to that seen in ‘O Vernicle.’ Calling upon Mary, the text reads:

> Helpe, Lady, & all myne,
> And keep vs eu*er* fro Hell pyne.
> *Scheld* me to-dey fro vylony,
> And fro all wekyd company;
> Thou *scheld* me fro all werld*es* schame,
> And from all oþer wyked fame (ll. 14-20, *my emphasis*).[25]

Just as ‘O Vernicle’ lists sins to avoid and calls upon the *arma* to shield the reader from them, the Orison invokes Mary as a shield from sins. The poem uses the verb 'shield' four times in the short orison (40 lines), explicitly marking the defensive purpose of the prayer. In many ways, the language is strikingly similar to 'O Vernicle'; compare, for instance, ‘keep vs eu*er* fro Hell pyne’ and ‘Schild me fro pyne of hell pitte’ (l. 71, ‘O Vernicle’). In the Orison, however, the call to Mary is unapologetically affective. The

[25] Rossell Hope Robbins, “Private Prayers in Middle English Verse,” *Studies in Philology* 36, no. 3 (1939), p. 468. From Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 61. Note - not an 'O Vernicle' manuscript. There is no edition of the text from an 'O Vernicle' witness. Prayer also in TEAMS Middle English Marian Lyrics, no. 59, from Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Liturg. G.2.

beginning of the poem repeated calls upon Mary as mother and maiden to ‘thinke on me!’ (l. 2), as the speaker imagines her ‘terys þou letyst vnd*er* Rode’ (l. 11). Despite her tears, there is nothing weak about Mary, who the speaker calls upon to help them with ‘all þi myght’ (l. 26). She is able to act as a defensive warrior on behalf of the speaker, and intercede with God through her powerful prayer.

Even more directly affective is ‘An Orison of the Passion’ (‘Ihesu þat haste me dere bought,' DIMEV 2915), found in three ‘O Vernicle’ witnesses (C2, H1, and L). The poem explicitly acknowledges its own affective mode, asking Christ to, ‘Write now gostely in my thought, / That I may with deuocion / Thynk apon they passion’ (ll. 1-4).[26] The speaker wishes for spiritual engagement with the Passion narrative, and asks Christ to write it in their heart. In fact, the poem goes on to identify the memorialization of the *arma* as that which can, not only inscribe the Passion onto the heart of readers, but also defends them from the attacks of the devil:

> The nayles and the spere also
> That thow were with to deth[*e*] doo,
> The croune and þe scourges grete
> That thow was with so sore bete, […]
> *For, whiles I haue them in my thought,*
> *The deuyl, I hope, sal dere me nought* (ll. 63-66, 73-74, *my emphasis*).[27]

If the reader holds the *arma* ‘in my thought,’ Christ may ‘[w]rite in myne hert þat rewful syght’ (l. 54). The goal is meditative imagination of the Passion scene, whereby the

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[26] Mabel Day, *The Wheatley Manuscript: A Collection of Middle English Verse and Prose Contained in a Ms. Now in the British Museum, Add. Mss. 39574* (London: Pub. for the Early English Text Society, by H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1921), p. 1. Text from British Library, MS Add. 39574 (no edition exists using an 'O Vernicle' witness).
[27] Ibid., ‘An Orison on the Passion,’ p. 3.

reader affectively engages with the horrors of Christ's crucifixion in order that it may be inscribed in their heart. Meanwhile, such meditation defends against spiritual attack and allows the reader to seek forgiveness. The speaker calls upon Christ to, 'loue-arowes to my hert sende' (l. 108), once more turning a weapon into a force for piety. Arrows, once the 'fiery darts of the most wicked one' (Eph. 6:16) are transformed into 'loue-arowes' of Christ, as correct meditation shields the penitent from the weapons of the devil. 'O Vernicle' is a poem written to support the kind of meditation that this speaker identifies as defensive. By imagining the *arma* one-by-one alongside their role in the Passion, through text and imagetext, the speaker can defend against demonic attacks using the armor of God and transform this devotion into something spiritually valuable.

'O Vernicle,' on the other hand, describes itself as an act of penance ('And here to folfille my penance,' l. 138) and has little in the way of affective language. It does not seek to shock or awe with bloody description. Yet, the poem's frequent appearance alongside affective partner texts and its combination of text, image, and format indicates that it is frequently part of a devotional program that *includes* affective remembering. The very act of spiritual arming using the *arma Christi* is also an imaginative memorialization, and a form of ritualized reading. The presence of the indulgence for *arma Christi* devotions demonstrates an expansion out from an affective, emotional reading only, to one that seeks exchange for the devotions. 'These Arms of Crist,' the indulgence for the *arma Christi* devotions (DIMEV 5196) appears in six of the 'O Vernicle' witnesses (R, B, L, Hd, H1, E), and like the prayer for the redemption, is only found proceeding 'O Vernicle.' It is stated in the indulgence that it is the 'beholding,' that

is, the seeing, of the *arma* (whether in image, or in mental imaginings from the text) that offers protection from evil:

> For syȝt of þe uernacul hath graunt
> xl dayus to p*ar*don,
> And þer-with-al her benisun.
> And also who þat eu*er*i day
> Þis armus of crist be-hold may,
> Þat day he ne sal dee no wiked ded
> Ne be cu*m*bert with þe kued;
> A*nd* also to wymen hit is meke *and* mild,
> When þey trauelne of her chi[l]d. (ll. 216-224).[28]

The 'syȝt' of the Vernicle is enough to grant forty days of pardon from purgatory for the devout viewer of its image, and more generally, to behold the *arma* halts the sinner from performing wicked deeds. While specific penitential renderings of the text are advantageous, it is the affective 'beholding' that grants protection from sin. Here, the amuletic properties of the text are explicit, even a woman in labor is protected through using the roll. The reference to the woman in labor further strengthens the possibility of text being used as amulet, the 'original roll' that Nichols speculates about, could well have been a birth girdle similar to those described by Morse.

Edsall is correct in noticing that, in ‘O Vernicle,’ ‘[w]hat dominates, rather, is a language of protection [... at] the same time, in both the opening stanza and the indulgence “These armes of Christ” (when it is included) the act of gazing at the images is privileged as the cause of this protection.’[29] However, in several manuscripts, most

[28] Morris, *Legends of the Holy Rood; Symbols of the Passion and Cross-Poems,* p. 196.
[29] Edsall, “*Arma Christi* Rolls or Textual Amulets?” p. 188.

notably perhaps, the lambda manuscripts H1 and L, which both include *all* partner texts (‘These armes of Christ,’ the Orison to the Virgin Mary, the Orison to the Passion, the prayer of thanksgiving for the redemption, and Richard de Caistre's hymn), the arma are recreated visually through evocative textual imagery, and promote the 'remembering' of the Passion through meditation.

With the rise of affective piety, meditation expands beyond devotional words written in a book, to objects such as the *arma Christi*, the body of Christ, through the imaginative image, or the physical object in church wall paintings or decorations. ‘O Vernicle,’ while not strictly affective is, I believe, a product of an affective culture, and one that believes their faith is under seige, and responds with defensiveness. Gayk seems to view the protective/ defensive and the affective as somehow opposed or incompatible: ‘[w]hile the indulgences and charms that often circulate with the *arma Christi* tradition emphasize the instruments’ ability to protect and pardon, this tradition consistently returns to affective meditation on the wounded body of Christ and to the power of language to effect internal as well as external transformation.’[30] I disagree, and would rather argue that while the affective is in play in the *arma Christi* representations, it is the *defensive* that the tradition returns too. In the *arma Christi,* the purpose of affective imagining is for defense.

While the speaker of 'O Vernicle' repeatedly insists that its purpose is to seek protection from sins of the senses, moral sins, and even physical weapons, the indulgence offers guidance on how to perform this penance appropriately. 'O Vernicle' and the *arma*

[30] Gayk, in Cooper and Denny-Brown, *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture,* p. 287.

Christi tradition stand at the intersection of several traditions; of affectivity, penitential prayer and punishment, confession, and sermon-like preaching - the combination of the poem and its partner texts demonstrate this traditional mélange. Where partner texts are present, they provide an alternative modulation for the instrument's assault on Christ – one that is emotionally evocative. However, 'O Vernicle's focus on the sins of the senses, the connection between the arma and various sins, and the combination of text, image, and manuscript format, all suggest that the text was supposed to be read defensively.

It is perhaps not surprising that this form of engagement was expected from an *arma Christi* poem and images as the Instruments of the Passion were already deeply embedded in the emotional envisioning and remembering of the Passion. The images, of course, support this, by conjuring associations with Christ as Man of Sorrows and the Mass of St Gregory. Even when the arma images are isolated from the emotional tactility of the Man of Sorrows imagery, that is, without the bloodied figure of the suffering Christ, the memorilization of imagery would have ensured an emotional engagement with the objects.[31]

[31] Edsall would agree. She writes that ‘the "amulet effect" of the "O Vernicle" imagetext was very likely strong even when an indulgence or other rubric was lacking. *Arma Christi* images were some of the most widely disseminated indulgenced images at the time, and the popular indulgenced images of the Man of Sorrows and the Mass of St. Gregory also often included the *arma.'* Edsall, “*Arma Christi* Rolls or Textual Amulets?” p. 195.

Illustrating the Passion

As already noted, eighteen of the twenty witnesses to 'O Vernicle' are accompanied by illustrations of the *arma Christi*. Like the text itself, the images lead the reader through the story of the Passion through the *arma Christi*. The poem, and the images, usually begin and end with Christ's image. All complete manuscripts begin with 'O Vernicle,' in which Christ's face appears miraculously on the cloth ('þe cloth he sete to his face' l. 3). In most manuscripts, the final image depicts Christ rising from the tomb, often in likeness to a Man of Sorrows image. Furthermore, Christ's face appears again in the ninth stanza, the veil before his eyes (usually in front of the veil); in the twenty second stanza of the Jew spitting in the face of Christ; and the twenty third stanza of Christ bearing the cross. Spaced throughout the poem, the representations of Christ serve as sharp reminders of the violent actions performed against Christ, and to centralize Christ in the remembering of, and devotion to, the *arma*. Yet, these stanzas are rarely affective, and picturing the violence enacted upon Christ is usually left up to the imagination. The text is cyclical, leading the reader from and to the body of Christ, punctuated with reminders of such a body.

The final image, however, of Christ rising from the sepulcher does something a little different as it visually imitates the already established tradition of the Man of Sorrows. The appearance in the likeness of the Man of Sorrows conjures associations both with the affective mode and with the popular Man of Sorrows indulgences. Swanson writes of an English devotional sheet, containing a Man of Sorrows image, found in a 1503 Book of Hours, that:

> By imagining him- or herself affectively engaged with Gregory's vision, the user becomes or replaces Gregory I in imagination, and in turn has the vision of Christ as Man of Sorrows. This makes the image more than merely devotional. It becomes a manifestation of the particular kind of participatory devotion which has been labelled 'the mysticism of the historical event', in which the devout Christian projects him- or herself into the events (most often the events of the Passion) to participate in a 'devotional present.'[32]

This kind of 'participatory devotion' is true also of defensive reading – but in the 'O Vernicle,' the poet, scribes, and illustrators take pains to isolate each *arma* for individual contemplation. While illustration of the Man of Sorrows depict Christ surrounded by the *arma*, the 'O Vernicle' illustrations do not. Rather, they each receive their own isolated section. The rolls particularly display the *arma Christi* across the page with an accompanying stanza that presents a visual story.

Figure 11 London, British Library, Egerton 1821, f. 8v-9r, c. 1480-90. Image credit: http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=8389.

One example of an indulgenced Man of Sorrows depiction is found as an addition to a late fifteenth-century English Psalter: London, British Library, Egerton 1821 (Figure

[32] R. N. Swanson, 'Two Texts and an Image,' in Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson, *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and Its Meanings* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), p. 239.

11). Two woodcuts at the beginning of the text (following three pages painted black with red blood droplets, worn from probable repeated touching or kissing), depict Christ as Man of Sorrows surrounded by the *arma Christi*, and the wounds and sacred heart around a cross. The Man of Sorrows illustration on f. 8v depicts, at the center, the bloodied body of Christ rising from the tomb, standing before the cross. Surrounding the cross are compartmentalized *arma Christi* representations. The illustrator, like the 'O Vernicle' poet, has been careful to prioritize representations of Christ's image, placing Christ's face on the veronica top and center, and his face appears again bottom center in the scene with the spitting Jew. The indulgence, later defaced, reads: 'To all the*m* þ*at* deuoutly say *five* p*ater* no*ster*s, *five* aues, *and* a cred afore such a fig*ure* ar*e* granted *32,755* ye*ar*s of par*don*.' Offering spiritual power to pardon, the indulgence uses the *arma Christi* combined with representations of Christ's bodies to guide an affective response to imagining the Passion and praying before the image. This woodcut indulgence is made all the more remarkable by the parchment it is stuck to. The leaves are painted red to look like dripping blood an explicit metaphor for the skin of Christ - the mutilated animal object is transformed into devotional praxis. This image, however, goes beyond simply reproducing in its pages the Passion, but itself, as a book object, becomes a part of the that Passion - it bleeds, it is consumed, and it is sensed.

Hirsh writes of these traditions that, in 'England, even more than elsewhere, the devotion quickly became involved with, even rolled into, other devotions, other practices, particularly those which required a degree of introspective meditation: the element of display was maintained by illustrations if in manuscript or by woodblock in a printed

text.'[33] The 'O Vernicle' manuscripts, dating throughout the fifteenth-century, are very much in line with the phenomenon of devotional and indulgenced woodcuts.[34] Their devotional mode combines the defensive and the affective mode, encouraging a memorial imagining of Christ's Passion in a way that is equally penitential and affective.

The imagining of Christ's Passion is particularly borne out in the argument of Newhauser and Russell in their examination of MS B.[35] They read the final image of Christ rising from the sepulcher as the culmination of a virtual pilgrimage in which the reader has imagined him/herself around the pilgrimage points of Jerusalem. They remark, '[i]t is only after the virtual pilgrim has contemplated the instruments, arrived at the foot of the cross, and made full repentance that s/he is ready to receive the just reward: a second glimpse of the divine in the image of the Man of Sorrows,'[36] the first is, of course, Christ's face on the Vernicle. They go on to say that 'in the virtual Blairs pilgrimage the user also ends at a tomb, this sepulcher is not empty. In this way, the cycle of Blairs begins and ends with the presence of God.'[37] Whether or not Newhauser and Russell's analysis of B as kind of virtual pilgrimage is true, the final image and stanza illustrating Christ in likeness to the Man of Sorrows acts as a kind of holy endorsement of the

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[33] John C. Hirsh, "Two English Devotional Poems of the Fifteenth Century," *Notes and Queries* 15, no. 1 (January 1, 1968): 4–11, p. 130.

[34] Gayk writes that 'While indulgenced representations of the *arma Christi* declined in the fifteenth century in France, they appear to have grown in popularity in England [...] The value of the indulgences varied, ranging from thousands of days in early examples to thousands of years in some incunabula and sixteenth-century broadsies. The user earned pardon both by devoutly looking at the images and by devoutly reciting prayers; the efficacy of the object thus might depend on sight, verbal performance, or the combination of the two.' Gayk, 'Early Modern Afterlives,' in Cooper and Denny-Brown, *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture*, p. 277.

[35] Richard G. Newhauser and Arthur J. Russell, 'Mapping Virtual Pilgrimage in an Early Fifteenth-Century *Arma Christi* Roll,' in Ibid.

[36] Newhauser and Russell, 'Mapping Virtual Pilgrimage,' in Ibid., p. 106.

[37] Newhauser and Russell, 'Mapping Virtual Pilgrimage,' in Ibid., p. 107.

program of devotion that is laid out. Christ's bloodied image provides a devotional end-point to the meditations on the arma inflicting suffering, and his rising from the tomb reminds of the Christ's triumph over death, and the reclaiming of the arma as symbols of defensive shields for the penitent.

The imaginative act is, in the case of the 'O Vernicle' witnesses, the defensive act. While B could easily have encouraged the viewer to imagine a virtual pilgrimage, perhaps in the style of a *Sacri Monti* experience, 'peeping' into each scene. Unlike the *Sacri Monti*, there is a textual dimension to the 'O Vernicle.' The text, rather than engaging in deep descriptive detail, usually describes how the *arma* was used to torment Christ, and then how is can be used for protection. Gayk writes that:

> [a]lthough pardon and protection could be earned by both seeing and reading the *arma Christi* imagetexts, the textual elements not only prescribed the interpretative and affective stance of the viewer of the image but also assured the legitimacy of the images of the *arma,* authorizing them as efficacious and even thaumaturgic objects and situating them in the realm of official piety.[38]

It was the combined impact of text and image in 'O Vernicle' that works to guide the viewers compartmentalized, defensive reading.

One roll does something a little unusual in its presentation of Christ's image. All but one of the Rolls contains a final illustration with a representation of Christ arising from the tomb. In C1 (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley Rolls 16), however, the sepulcher *is* conspicuously empty. This manuscript, rather than using the illustrated body of Christ as an incentive, focus, and reward for penitential and affective reading, uses the absence of Christ's body to support its affective agenda. The C1 illustrator, who copied

[38] Gayk, 'Early Modern Afterlives,' in Ibid., p. 277.

towards the end of the fifteenth century, was working at a time when concerns about illustrating Christ's likeness were rising. In contrast to B, the large tomb in C1 stands closed and sealed - inviting imaginative meditation on the concealed body within (see Figure 12). The onus is on the penitent to uncover this body in the imagination - the side of the greatest spiritual reward. The void left by the conspicuous lack of the holy body leaves space for the reader to insert their own body into the narrative. And this absence, together with the repeated emphasis of the reader's bodily sin found in the 'O Vernicle' text, stresses the protective purpose of this manuscript.

Figure 12 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley Rolls 16 (C1). 'The Sepulcher.' Image credit: personal photo.

C1 lacks the 'O Vernicle' stanza, beginning instead with a unique stanza, 'The Cock,' before continuing with 'The Veil Before His Eyes.' While this stanza could have provided opportunity to begin with Christ's body (in other manuscripts the veil is represented with the face of Christ before the cloth), no representation is attempted here either.[39] The illustration of the blindfold in Bodley Rolls 16 is a distinctly *blank canvas* (see Figure 13) – in both the metaphorical and the literal sense. The image is not tinted with colored ink, like many of the others in the roll, and draws the eye into a central blank space. It is a

[39] Although it cannot be easily proven that a membrane is not missing from the beginning of the text, I would argue that the unique presence of 'The Cock' suggests that this was a deliberate adaptation of the text (or the scribe was copying from a damaged exempla).

suitably modest image for a stanza that focuses on the sins of sight. The large blank cloth allows the reader to see the blindfold as though through Christ's eyes - they view only the fabric that stretches across the page and is intended to obscure the physical vision and thereby allow the spiritual vision to flourish in a state of *imitatio*.

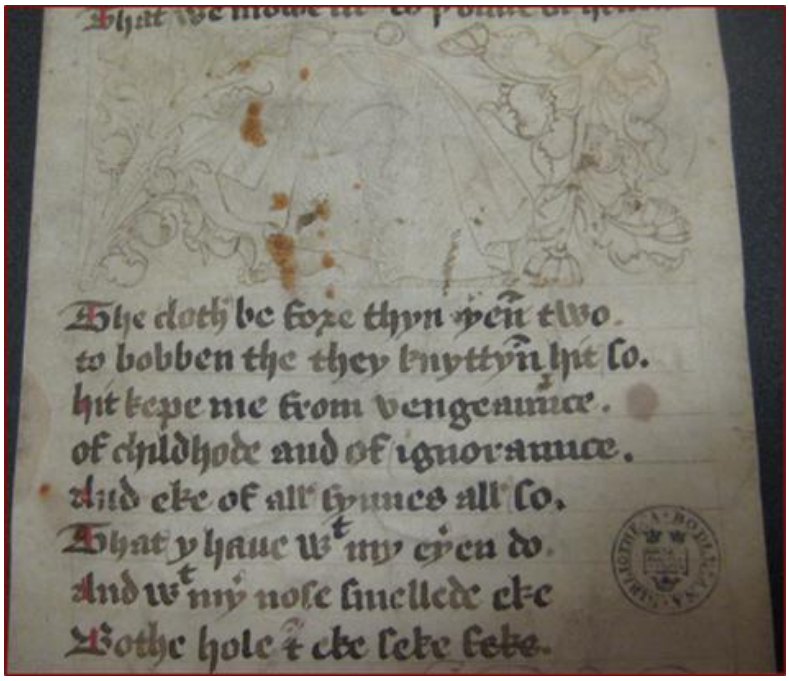

Figure 13 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley Rolls 16 (C1). 'The Veil Before His Eyes.' Image credit: personal photo.

The isolation of each *arma* in the 'O Vernicle' manuscripts and the associated traditions reveal a collecting principle that guides the presentations and redaction history of the poem. Each *arma* serves to build up the spiritual arsenal of the reader and, combined with partner texts, provides a comprehensive program of devotion that strays from the defensive ('O Vernicle'), to the penitential (indulgence to the *arma Christi*), and the affective ('The Fifteen O's').

Conclusions

The *arma Christi* straddle the boundary between the material and the immaterial, and the historic and the symbolic. The weapons used to torture Christ in the Gospel accounts were frequently 'discovered' as historic artifacts and relics, and were thought to exist, and have survived as physical, literal objects. At the same time, these objects became powerful signifiers of the spiritual fight against the devil – they are gifted weapons from Christ that the worthy Christian can use in their fight against sin and evil. Perhaps part of the surge in popularity for the *arma Christi* was that their representations could hold power without the presence of their literal counterparts. They offered a material connection to Christ's Passion, and the miraculous and defensive properties of saints' relics without the expense of acquiring them.

The combined text-image *arma Christi* shields of 'O Vernicle' are presented as relics – as something to be meditated upon, to provide divine intervention and protection. Unlike relics, however, the *arma Christi* in 'O Vernicle' require a meditative defensive reading in order to achieve their full efficacy. The combined presentation of text and image in roll format with a clear apotropaic agenda suggests that the manuscripts may even have been amuletic, in line with uses of other contemporary *arma Christi* rolls. Readers of 'O Vernicle' are encouraged to gather the *arma Christi* as though they are weapons in a treasury. The compilers of 'O Vernicle' present text and image together on rolls to allow the reader to pause and meditate on each *arma*, and treat each as a singular object for defense – piece-by-piece readers can equip themselves with a different armament. 'O Vernicle' functions alongside its partner texts, and they shape a devotional

defensive reading that draws on penitential and affective traditions. The act of defensive reading was at once both personal and meditative, as well as performative and ritualistic. Together, the codicology, image-text relationship, partner texts, and format demand the reader to perform a defensiveness, to don Pauline armor and shield themselves from devilish attacks.

PART II: THE *BANNA*-POET'S *SOUTH ENGLISH LEGENDARY*

Introduction

In the *SEL* account of St Christina the persecuted saint hurls her amputated tongue at her aggressor, blinding him: 'Þis tonge sprong al abrod . al þis men isie / And þis Iustice harde smot . & hutte out eiþer eiȝe' (ll. 335-36, p. 326).[1] Meanwhile, Christina, without a tongue, miraculously shouts out proclamations of faith. Her tongue, the victim of her persecutor's sword, is transformed into a weapon with which she can defend herself. Saints' are frequently the performers of defensive devotion, often muscular in their efforts to protect and defend their faith (represented by their virginity, isolation, temptation, etc.) and the *SEL* is not short of militant saints who demonstrate, literally or allegorically, how to defend one's faith against the Christian enemy. Part II of this dissertation is concerned with how readers of saints' lives are encouraged to don spiritual armor for themselves, and how the compilers and authors of the *SEL* manipulate the text to encourage them to do so.

Books, stories, speech, signs, and relics are, at various stages in the *SEL*, ascribed apotropaic quality. In the *SEL* Invention of the Holy Cross entry, a cross is carried into battle in place of banner and enables victory for Emperor Constantine: 'A crois he let make sone . þat is men touore him bere / In stude of is baner . to bataille he wende anon /

[1] Unless stated otherwise, all quotations from the *SEL* will be taken from D'Evelyn and Mill, *The South English Legendary*. Line and page numbers will be acknowledged within the text.

And þoru uerto of þe holi crois . he ouercom is fon' (ll. 214-6, p. 174, Invention of the Holy Cross). In the account of St Barnabas, the holy figure lays his Gospel book upon the sick to channel God's power and miraculously heal them:

> Þe gospelles of sein Mattheu . wiþ him euere he bar
> In a bok as God it wolde . & wiþ him he hadde it þar
> Þis boc he laide uppon þis man . as he sik þer lay
> Hi bicom anon hol and sond (ll. 61-64, p. 219).

Not only does the holy text offer spiritual protection, but the book itself acts as contact relic for this intercessory power.

In Part II, I examine how the readers and redactors of the *SEL* (particularly the individual described here as the *Banna*-poet) understood the text as an aid for defensive reading. I argue that a collective principle guided the construction of the *SEL* early into its transmission history. As 'O Vernicle' collects *arma Christi* as relics to add to an arsenal of spiritual weapons, the *SEL* collects saints' lives as examples of *miles Christi*. Like 'O Vernicle,' the entries for saints' lives frequently end with a call to a divine intercessor, either God or the saints, to 'shield' the reader/ listener from enemies, sin, pain, and hell.[2] The early 'A-redactor/s,' whose influence touches every extant witness, worked to place a structural and ideological framework onto the *SEL*. The creation of

[2] For example, the entry for St Leonard ends: 'Nou God schulde ous for loue of seint Leonard : fram þe prisoun of helle' (l. 186, p. 483); and the entry for St Katherine: 'Ȝyue ous þe ioye of heuene : & schulde ous fram helle pine' (l. 310, p. 543); and St Nicholas: 'Schulde ous fram þe pyne of helle : & fram dedluch synne also' (l. 486, p. 566). All of these examples are from MS H, and indeed H demonstrates many more calls for a spiritual shield than C (following the D'Evelyn and Mill edition). This early fourteenth-century MS containing *SEL* entries only was in the possession of a secular family in the 1570s ('In the early 1570's it was in the possession of the Sanford family of Combe Florey, Somerset,' Görlach, *The Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary*, pp. 84-5). While it is possible the use of the possessive pronoun 'us' could incorporate a preaching agenda, it is equally possible, and I think implicated by the later use of the MS, that this instruction was for reading and listening in the home.

such a framework, I argue, established the *SEL* as a text for *reading*. Not only were the readers of the *SEL* encouraged to pay attention to the trope of the *miles Christi*, they were also encouraged to read these lives similarly to the way they offered devotion to a relic collection or gazed upon the compartmentalized *arma Christi*. Rather than simply looking to literary evidence of defensive saints, I also look to the way the *SEL* was shaped across the two centuries that it was copied. In carrying out a sustained study of the *SEL* redaction, I hope to practically demonstrate how defensive reading evolved in the copying of the *SEL*. While 'O Vernicle' compartmentalizes defensive units into stanzas with accompanying illustrations, the *SEL* presents isolated *vitae* that can be read as textual shields and frames them within a narrative structure that encourages reading them as such.

The *SEL* survives in over sixty medieval witnesses. In terms of survival alone, the *SEL* is *the* most significant English verse text of the thirteenth century. Despite the unprecedented number of extant manuscripts, however, the text remains elusive. Some vigorous scholarship has grappled with, but by no means resolved, questions of authorship, readership, audience, and sources for this exceptional text. To date, critics have offered two main theories for the *SEL*'s textual transmission. Firstly, Manfred Görlach championed a 'redactionist' approach, the goal of which was to uncover a 'plausible reconstruction of the growth of the *SEL*.'[3] Secondly, Beverly Boyd first advanced a 'fluid corpus' approach, advocating for a corpus of entries that were flexible enough to be drawn from according to the needs of the compiler or patron in question.

[3] Ibid., p. 4.

Despite the limitations of a redactionist approach for such a convoluted and chaotic textual tradition, the poetic trademarks of certain individuals' is striking. Most modern readers begin the *SEL* with the lines of the 'prologue' or *Banna sanctorum*, an entry that skillfully expands two poetic metaphors. Indeed, many medieval readers did too. An individual involved in revising the *SEL* at the time of the 'A-redaction' presumably added this entry. I choose to call the entry the *Banna* – a convenient title in that it is twice attested in the medieval witnesses, but one that also provides an appropriate thematic context for the text, whilst avoiding the contested attribution of the entry as a 'prologue.' The nature of this highly stylized entry can leave readers with little doubt that, firstly, this is a product of an individual, and secondly, that the entry was written in expectation of setting up a framework for reading a collection of predominantly saints' lives.

The *SEL* is both exceptional and typical as an early Middle English text. Its exceptionality does not come simply from its defiance of categorization, but also from its scope (both of number of saints, and of manuscript types), as well as its evident popularity. This popularity was partially informed by the *SEL*'s engagement with issues of defensive spirituality set through the examples of the saints. In these examples of the saints, the *SEL* is typical - it was not the first, nor the last, collection of hagiographic materials to originate in England or be written in English; the ninth-century *Old English Martyrology* (which also has an expansive transmission history across two centuries), for example, contains over two hundred entries for local and international saints arranged

calendrically.[4] Bede's Latin *Martyrology*, written in the eighth-century, compiles saints' lives by feast day and includes saints from across Christendom, including Bede's own Northumbria.[5] In the late tenth century, Aelfric wrote an extensive collection of prose saints' lives in Old English,[6] and there are plenty of examples of other individual Old English poems about saints including the verse life of St Juliana[7] and St Andrew.[8] The motivations of each of these authors was different – Bede, it seems, wanted to secure the place of England within the spiritual history of Christendom, the Old English Martyrologist likely wanted to provide a hagiographic 'database' of local and international saints as a reference guide for preaching and devotion. Yet, all these authors shared a desire to 'collect' saints' lives, indeed, collecting was the inherent guiding principle of the genre of legendaries and martyrologies. This collecting impulse is evident in all sections of this dissertation, extending from collecting accounts of saints in a legendary or martyrology to collecting (by means of texts, objects, or images) the instruments of Christ's Passion. It is indicative of the desire to build up 'literary armor' to employ against

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[4] See Christine Rauer, *The Old English Martyrology: Edition, Translation and Commentary*, New edition, Anglo-Saxon Texts ; 10 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2013), p. 1. According to Rauer's calculations, there is 238 extant entries in the OEM. See also, Rauer's website: Christine Rauer, "The Old English Martyrology: An Annotated Bibliography," https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/~cr30/martyrology/index.htm. Accessed August 5, 2017.

[5] See Thomas Head, ed., *Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology*, Garland Reference Library of the Humanities, vol. 1942 (New York: Garland Pub, 2000).

[6] Manfred Görlach, *Studies in Middle English Saints' Legends*, Anglistische Forschungen ; Heft 257 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag CWinter, 1998), p. 1. 'Texts on saints' lives were among the most prominent genres in OE literature; the include compositions in classical poetic diction and metre such as the excellent poem in alliterative long lines on St Juliana as well as the impressive corpus of legends in rhythmic prose written by Aelfric.' See Walter W. Skeat, ed., *Aelfric's Lives of Saints : Being a Set of Sermons on Saints' Days Formerly Observed by the English Church, EETS* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2014).

[7] See Robert E. Bjork, ed., *The Old English Poems of Cynewulf*, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library ; 23 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013).

[8] See Cynewulf, *Andreas and The Fates of the Apostles: Two Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poems*, ed. George Philip Krapp, Albion Series of Anglo-Saxon and Middle English Poetry (Boston ; New York: Ginn & Company, 1906).

the attacks of the devil. Through correct reading of texts such as the *SEL* and 'O Vernicle', the penitent can defend body and soul against the 'fiery darts' of the devil (Eph. 6:16).

Somewhere within the history and redactions of the *SEL*, I argue, an individual, or several individuals, conceived of the text as a collection of warrior saints exemplifying how to fight the devil. One figure particularly involved in this effort was less concerned with broad salvific principles and more concerned with the protection of individuals. This figure, the *Banna*-poet, was responsible for revising a number of *SEL* entries and constructing the entry known as the *Banna sanctorum*. While I share Pickering's reservations that '[t]he task of disentangling the contribution of different poets is, however, immense, because of the scores of manuscripts and thousands of lines of verse involved,'[9] I also see value in attempting to do so. Indeed, Pickering successfully uncovers a great deal of information about his 'Outspoken Poet,' (likely an 'A-redactor' and the reviser of the 'Southern Passion' and the 'Expanded Nativity'). On the other hand, Thompson resists the idea of individual influencers, writing that 'there are features common to the SEL that lead us to see its "originality" as ubiquitous rather than as uniquely located in one "author" and not another.'[10] I disagree, and in the tone and style of the *Banna*, I see the influence of a literary-minded individual. For the *Banna*-poet, saints exemplified the ways by which to defend against the attacks of aggressors or demons, and their integration into daily devotional habits allowed devotees to remember

[9] Pickering, 'The Outspoken *South English Legendary* Poet,' in Doyle and Minnis, *Late-Medieval Religious Texts and Their Transmission,* p. 21.
[10] Thompson, *Everyday Saints and the Art of Narrative in the South English Legendary,* p. 117.

and practice saintly examples regularly. The *SEL* attests to this continuing interest in presenting short accounts of saints to practice effective, defensive devotion.

Part II, Section 1, *Texts and Contexts*, establishes the context in which the *SEL* was copied. By examining the audience/s, the manuscripts, the redactionary and stemmatic history, and the approaches to studying the manuscript tradition, I will examine how the *SEL* was, at various stages in its transmission history, manipulated for defensive reading. I argue that although the *SEL* was a flexible text that allowed those who copied, edited, and commissioned it to use and adapt entries selectively, the '*Banna*-poet' or 'A-redactor' produced a version of the *SEL* which transformed the reception of the text through two centuries. Placing myself in the middle ground of the leading theories of the *SEL*'s textual transmission, I demonstrate that, by tracing the transmission of particular elements of textual production, certain trends can be uncovered. Namely, I will show that the efforts of the *Banna*-poet to define the *SEL* as a collection of sanctified model warriors resulted in the popularization of this effort - a version of the *SEL* which, despite flexibility in the selection and usage of *SEL* entries and units, was copied and recopied.

Section 2, *Reading Redactions*, deals with an early reader of the collection – a redactor whose 'edits' transformed the historical trajectory of the *South English Legendary*, imbuing it with a defensive purpose and shaping the way it was recopied through the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. I argue two main points about the development and usage of the *SEL*: firstly, that an early reader-redactor added a significant entry to the *SEL*, the *Banna Sanctorum*, which imagines readers as warriors engaged in a spiritual battle; secondly, that the *Banna*-poet adapted and added other

entries in order to center the besieged faith thematically in the *SEL*. I argue the *Banna*-poet sought to bring the saints' lives together as a collection in order to present the *vitae* as role-models of spiritual defensiveness. While Liszka argues the *Banna* is a transition between the *sanctorale* (fixed saints' feasts) and *temporale* (movable feasts),[11] I argue that regardless of the text's placement, the *Banna*-poet considers it to sum up the schematic of the collection as a whole. The fact that the text quickly became adopted as a prologue in eight early manuscripts points to a wide reader reception in support of the A-redactor's goals. I acknowledge, but for my purposes argue against, the recently adopted position that the text should be perceived in the plural (the *South English Legendaries*) and that the *Banna Sanctorum* was only a transitional unit between *temporale* and *sanctorale*.[12] Rather, I examine a singular *SEL* – the *Banna*-poet's *SEL*.

1. Texts and Contexts

Audience/s and Intentions

There have been no conclusive arguments put forward about the intended purpose of the *SEL*. This is likely because the text/s and the manuscripts give little away when it comes to determining their intended audience. Yet, attempts to do so have brought certain

[11] See Thomas R. Liszka, "The First 'A' Redaction of the 'South English Legendary': Information from the 'Prologue,'" *Modern Philology* 82, no. 4 (May 1, 1985): 407–13.
[12] An argument put forward by Liszka in Ibid. This opinion has been embraced by the edits Blurton and Wogan-Browne, *Rethinking the South English Legendaries*. Also by Ayoush Sarmada Lazikani, *Cultivating the Heart: Feeling and Emotion in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Religious Texts,* 2015.

features of the manuscripts and texts to bear.[1] Many have interpreted the short entry length, vernacular contexts, and calendrical arrangement of the lives to be evidence of use in preaching, particularly mendicant preaching. Beatrice Brown, in her EETS edition of *The Southern Passion* put forward the idea of mendicant authorship.[2] D'Evelyn, in the introduction to her edition, unquestioningly supports mendicant authorship without really engaging with it.[3] More recently, Blurton and Wogan-Browne have used the militaristic allegory of the *Banna* to suggest Franciscan authorship/s (but not necessarily audience/s).[4] Few arguments for preaching, however, have much grounding in the manuscript and textual evidence. The breadth of extant manuscripts is wide, and *SEL* materials are found alongside literary compendiums (V "Vernon"), medical and astrological material (A), secular and religious lyrics (Uz), and frequently with *SEL* items only, yet only one manuscript appears to be strictly homiletic in nature (Ry), and this manuscript contains only two selected *SEL* entries (see Appendix 2).[5]

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[1] For example, Görlach carefully examined the manuscript evidence for later users of the collection, and summarized them in: Görlach, *The Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary*, pp. 45-50.

[2] See 'The *South English Legendary* and the Friars' in Beatrice Daw Brown, *The Southern Passion*, Early English Text Society (Series). Original Series ; No. 169 (London: Published for the Early English Text Society by Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1927). pp. vciii-cx. Brown writes, 'The contents of the *Legendary*, in fact, compel the conclusion that the work was intended for the oral instruction of 'lewed folk.' p. xcvi.

[3] D'Evelyn writes that 'That the author was a friar – or friars – and the audience laymen has been effectively argued. The material this friar preacher put before his hearers – true stories of God's 'hardy knights' – had and still has its appeal as story and biography as well as ideal and example.' D'Evelyn and Mill, *The South English Legendary*.

[4] Blurton and Wogan-Browne write that '[t]he knights on horseback draw on Franciscan imagery even while they anticipate a more secular audience by deploying – and outdoing – tropes from popular romance.' Blurton and Wogan-Brown, 'Introduction,' in Blurton and Wogan-Browne, *Rethinking the South English Legendaries,* p. 5.

[5] However, Johnston and Van Dussen have valuably remarked that the manuscripts themselves can only provide hints not definitive answers for use, writing that '[m]anuscripts were typically produced to outlive their first users, not least because the decision to produce a manuscript included a hope that it would retain value and remain useful or relevant through more than one generation of readers. Introduction, Michael Johnston and Michael Van Dussen, *The Medieval*

In recent years, Sebastian Sobecki has argued for Dominican friar authorship. Sobecki's reasoning largely relies on the form of the *SEL* as one appropriate for preaching, he writes that:

> [t]o begin with, it is written in English, which makes it ideally suitable for preaching to the laity and, second, it is composed in septa metric couplets that, despite their length, are relatively easy to memorise because of the simple syntax [...] the highly irregular prosody emulates the natural pattern of speech - all this could support the suggestion that the Saints' Lives of the *SEL* served as homiletic vehicles. In addition, the comparably similar length of most pieces, with the notable exception of St Thomas Becket, renders the individual Saints' Lives convenient exempla for sermons or other preaching occasions.[6]

While many of these features do indeed make the text suitable for preaching, this does not preclude other possibilities; they also make the text suitable for personal reading or recital to a group. Sobecki's assumption of Dominican authorship comes largely from the treatment of St Dominic in the lives: '[t]he association of preaching with the procuring of salvation runs through the entire Life of Dominic […] Dominic is not merely an exemplary preacher but his Life is an exemplum of the redemptive power of preaching as he works his miracles through words.'[7] This claim is problematic on several levels: firstly, it is impossible to prove that the entry for St Dominic was part of the original *SEL* schematic; secondly, Dominic is not the only saint who appears to gain particular prominence;[8] and finally, Dominic's *vita* is omitted in nine of the major *SEL* manuscripts (AJUCQNPOD). Finally, St Dominic was a popular saint in England, but like the

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Manuscript Book: Cultural Approaches, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature ; 94 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 7.

[6] Sebastian Sobecki, "Exemplary Intentions Two English Dominican Hagiographers in the Thirteenth Century and the Preaching through Exempla," *New Blackfriars* 89, no. 1022 (2008): 478–87, p. 484.

[7] Ibid., p. 486.

[8] For example, the entry for Thomas of Becket is almost double the length of most other entries. For a preacher to memorise or recite it seems implausible at best.

inclusion of other local saints, this is not particularly revealing of authorship or use, other than to attest to their popularity in the thirteenth- and fourteenth-centuries.[9] So while it is plausible that the Dominicans had some influence over the composition of the Dominic entry, or even composed it, the assumption that it represents the *SEL*'s authorship fails to consider the probable development of the *SEL*.

Görlach reveals a healthy skepticism towards assigning a singular authorship or audience, but does acknowledge a potential preaching use. Writing of the arguments for mendicant influence, Görlach comments:

> Mendicant authorship has been so forcefully argued for the SEL by B. D. Brown that it would seem daring to doubt that the Dominicans or Franciscans must at least have made an important contribution to the SEL. All scholars stress the simple language and popular emotion and the admixture of homiletic elements, all indicative of a devotional style most purely expressed by the 13C friars preachers.[10]

More specifically, Görlach elaborates that this characteristic style includes: 'direct addresses to the audience, explicit exhortation and personal asides, reflection on the power of God and his saints and pouring scorn on the devil.'[11] The same features that make a text suitable for preaching also make for an engaging and accessible text for modular, defensive *reading*. While some of the entries may have their origins in preaching, I believe the textual tranmission shows more significant evidence for this private reading.

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[9] All of this is in contrast to the *Legenda Aurea*, which was written by a Dominican, and maintained a more stable transmission history than the *SEL*. See Jacobus de Voragine, "Medieval Sourcebook: The Golden Legend (Aurea Legenda)," trans. William Caxton, 1483, http://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/goldenlegend/.
[10] Görlach, *The Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary*, pp. 48-9.
[11] Ibid., p. 49.

The individual entries and manuscripts also attest to the shifting temporality of the *SEL* and interrogation of textual and manuscript evidence reveals the uses of the *SEL* were varied, and the audiences decidedly plural. Görlach provides evidence for nine different user groups using manuscript evidence – Augustinian, Cistercian, Premonstratensian, Benedictine monks and nuns, laymen, Augustinian canons, secular clergy, and friars[12] – all valid, potentially intended audiences. For such a fluid, historically manipulated text, the attempt to find an intended audience seems a somewhat fruitless task. Even if an 'original' audience and authorship can be convincingly argued, something that scholarship has not yet achieved, the variation in manuscript form and codicology attests to the variety of audiences through the text's history. While it is perhaps surprising that there are little to no references to readership, or comments on its own vernacularity, what this does achieve is a product suitable for a wide range of readers. Rather than going over much trodden ground attempting to uncover audiences, I think it is enough to say they were many and they were varied. It is likely, I believe, that the text of the *SEL* was originally used for preaching and later redacted for private reading, but the manuscripts show it was used for much in between. It is more significant, I think, that the text was made defensive by various redactors and readers. The *Banna*, for example, unites the text under a defensive agenda, and texts were recopied as apotropaic contributions to active agendas.

The lives in the *SEL* allowed individuals to follow in the militaristic mold of the saints. The English nature of the production, indicated not only by script, but by the *selection* of saints and consistent references to geography and origin, allowed readers to

[12] See Ibid., pp. 45-50.

envision themselves into a narrative of Christendom whereby they could fight against evil alongside their defenders and supporters - their saints. The number of English saints' appearing in the *SEL* increased throughout the Middle Ages, and this textual trajectory is attributed to a nationalizing influence. Catherine Sanok, writing of the adoption of the trope of Christian knighthood, suggests that it 'points to the crisis in English community provoked by the overlapping jurisdictions of royal and ecclesiastical authority.'[13] In contrast, Blurton and Wogan-Browne remark that:

> the *Banna sanctorum* prologue's implicit emphasis on the universality of the Christian struggle through its crusading imagery suggests that at least one contemporary understanding of the work saw it as having little to do with the Englishness often celebrating by critics as its particular feature.[14]

In support of Sanok, I believe it is important to note that the *Banna* author is simply following in the footsteps of numerous poets and authors before them and writing English ecclesiastical history into a cosmic context.

The fact that the *SEL* appears to have gained a national identity, the fact it gains an identity at all, encourages our understanding of *a text*, one with recognizable features and structure/ organization. This would certainly explain why so many of the lives of native saints begin with a variation on the line, 'was of Engelonde' (St Chad, l. 1, p. 78). This identity, as a *liber festivalis* for England, might explain why the entry for arguably the most famous British saint, Thomas Becket, is afforded an epic 2444 lines, by far the longest account of any *SEL* entry (most entries on average range from 100 to 1000 lines).

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[13] Catherine Sanok, 'Forms of community in the South English Legendary' in Blurton and Wogan-Browne, *Rethinking the South English Legendaries*, p. 224.
[14] Blurton and Wogan-Browne, 'Introduction', Ibid., p. 9.

The presence of this life indicates the *SEL*'s structure is flexible enough to allow for an entry that does not fit the confines of its usually short hagiographic entries

Overall, I believe that, at the earliest stages of the *SEL's* development, the entries could have been written with preaching purpose in mind. While the evidence is non-conclusive, but the fact that many entries are short enough to have been included in a sermon or adapted to one, that they are written in English, that other equivalent models were used for preaching, all suggest it is possible, even probable, that this was the case. However, this purpose, I argue, was short-lived. The A-redactor/ *Banna*-poet intended their text for defensive *reading*. Adjustments to the text, like the entry for Becket, and the framing provided by the *Banna*, suggested this text was for reading.

Manuscripts

Before elaborating on the literary embellishments of the *Banna*-poet, it is first necessary to know something of the manuscript tradition of the *SEL*. The sixty plus manuscripts attest to the wide range of genres and contents represented by the *SEL* – collections of lives appear within miscellanies, as individual manuscripts, alongside devotional and superstitious materials, and more. The compilers, copiers, and redactors of the *SEL* evidently identified a kind of flexibility in the usage of the *SEL* and copied it extensively in a range of contexts. While, like every medieval text, the number of lost manuscripts will remain a mystery, the number of surviving manuscript attests to the *SEL*'s popularity throughout the two centuries it was actively recopied. Nine manuscripts

survive from pre-1350,[15] at least twenty more dating from the fourteenth century. Most extant witnesses survive from the fifteenth century. In the second half of the fifteenth century, there is a surge in manuscripts containing selected *SEL* entries (i.e. entries for saints or feasts that do not appear to be part of a coherent 'collection' of *SEL* material), demonstrating new purposes of *SEL* materials.

Helen Marshall speaks of the *SEL* as 'fostered by a broad base of readers and scribes,'[16] and she goes on to say that 'one aspect which encouraged the proliferation of *SEL* manuscripts was the text's formal adaptability. The text was well suited for dissemination in England's compilatory culture where scribes could adapt materials to reflect the needs of local audiences.'[17] In agreement with Marshall, I try and refine this further to argue that the continued popularity of both the *SEL* as a whole and its component entries with its 'broad base of readers and scribes' and 'local audiences,' was motivated to a significant extent by the defensive capabilities of the text. The patterns created in the *SEL*'s transmission point to a desire to harness the protective powers of the saints, and to do so through short lives that allow the reader to 'collect' saints for their spiritual armor. They demonstrate a belief in a constantly besieged Christian faith, and the urgent belief in the need to use saints as amulets to protect against spiritual attacks.

Attention to the *SEL* has increased following the publication of Manfred Görlach's 1974 expansive monograph, *The Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary* – a thorough and careful analysis of the 62 (+ 4 apparently lost) *SEL* manuscripts known at

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[15] Helen Marshall, "Literary Codicologies: The Conditions of Middle English Textual Production, c. 1280-1415" (University of Toronto, 2014), unpublished PhD dissertation, p. 67.
[16] Ibid., p. 68.
[17] Ibid., p. 68.

the time. This volume remains the only in-depth investigation of the *SEL*'s complex textual tradition. The last two decades have seen increased attention to the literary and cultural value of the *SEL*. Anne Thompson's monograph, *Everyday Saints and the Art of Narrative* (2003),[18] set the *SEL* within the larger cultural context of vernacular literature. The 2011 collection of essays, *Rethinking the South English Legendaries*,[19] aimed to 'relinquish the quest for the origins of the *SEL* [...] in favour of attention to the highly various ways in which this shifting narrative universe developed and was received.'[20] These volumes perhaps heralded a renewed interest in the *SEL* and, since 2011, further attention has been paid to the *SEL* by early career researchers such as Helen Marshall,[21] and Ayoush Lazikani.[22]

There are two main editions of the *SEL*, as well as a 1927 EETS edition of *The Southern Passion* by Beatrice Brown (the *Southern Passion* is 'the narrative poem dealing with the Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension which is incorporated in numerous manuscripts of the *South English Legendary*').[23] The earliest edition attempting to reproduce an *SEL* collection is Horstmann's 1887 *The Early South English Legendary*.[24] This edition sought to recreate a version of the *SEL* using the oldest extant witness; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud 108. The original intention of the editor was to

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[18] Thompson, *Everyday Saints and the Art of Narrative in the South English Legendary*.
[19] Blurton and Wogan-Browne, in response to Liszka's essay within this volume, also drew attention to the various versions of the *SEL* that survive through the plural 'Legendaries.' Blurton and Wogan-Browne, *Rethinking the South English Legendaries*.
[20] Blurton and Wogan-Browne, 'Introduction,' Ibid., p. 14.
[21] Marshall, "Literary Codicologies: The Conditions of Middle English Textual Production, c. 1280-1415."
[22] Lazikani, *Cultivating the Heart*.
[23] Brown, *The Southern Passion*, p. 1.
[24] Carl Horstmann, *The Early South-English Legendary, or, Lives of Saints*, Early English Text Society (Series). Original Series ; No. 87 (London: Pub for the Early English Text Society by NTrübner & Co, 1887).

subsequently publish a second volume of the 'generally received text, as represented by MS Harley and the other old MSS.'[25] This partner edition never appeared, and *The Early South-English Legendary* subsequently received significant criticism due to the fact that it was not, as Görlach complains, 'typical of the collection at all.'[26] It should be noted, however, that Horstmann himself acknowledges that 'though being the oldest MS, it [MS Laud 108] is far from being correct, or from strictly representing the original text.'[7]

The second major edition, again for EETS, was D'Evelyn and Mill's three-volume 1956 version entitled *The South English Legendary* which remains the most complete edition available.[27] Their professed purpose was, 'to make available for further study the earliest orderly text of *The South English Legendary*.'[28] To do this, they adopted a copy-text technique, using CCCC, MS 145 (C) as the base-text, and filling the lacunae from London, BL, MS Harley 2277 (H). Variants were noted from Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 43 (A) and London, British Library, MS Cotton Julius D. IX (J). They provide no proper justification for the selection of their manuscripts other than the following: '[f]or control, MSS. Ashmole 43 and Cotton Julius D. ix were selected as covering between them all the items preserved in C 145 and H 2277.'[29] While this two-volume edition remains the most comprehensive of the total *SEL* collection of material, it lacks a detailed critical apparatus and fails to fully justify its selection of manuscripts. Scholars of the *SEL* would greatly benefit from a new edition of the *SEL*, so as to

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[25] Ibid., p. xi.
[26] Görlach, *The Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary*, p. 3.
[7] Horstmann, *The Early South-English Legendary, or, Lives of Saints*, p. x.
[27] D'Evelyn and Mill, *The South English Legendary*.
[28] Ibid., p. v.
[29] Ibid., p. v.

facilitate the study of the many other areas of the *SEL* that remain unexplored. Little attention has been paid, for example, to the incorporation of single *SEL* entries within other contexts.

Görlach aimed to identify the relationships and history of the *SEL* collection as a whole (see Appendix 2 for sigla). In doing so, Görlach separates the *SEL* manuscripts into three groups; 'major manuscripts' (25 manuscripts), 'fragments' (19 manuscripts), and 'miscellanies' (18 manuscripts + 5 'erroneously claimed to contain *SEL* items').[30] Yet, Görlach is keen to acknowledge that the distinctions between these manuscripts are 'merely practical and should not be pressed.'[31] We should not, Görlach reminds his readers, automatically assume that a 'major' manuscript is now, or was at the time of its production, complete. He notes:

> [o]f the [major manuscripts] group, only BGIJRW are complete (W containing two booklets with selections from the *SEL*), all the others [19 manuscripts] could then with some justification be listed as fragments, such as ETY and especially FKSX. I have refrained from doing so, because a classification of the textual traditions and a partial reconstruction of the original volumes is still possible in all these cases.[32]

Görlach identifies manuscripts as fragments if they do not allow 'one to reconstruct the original selection and arrangement,'[33] or if the fragmentary *SEL* texts are 'bound up with heterogeneous texts (BpCdLm), or inserted into different manuscripts (ArGrQb) - if the combination is post-medieval.'[34] The designation for 'miscellanies' might be said to be 'everything else,' and indeed Görlach notes that the manuscripts are 'of very different

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[30] Görlach, *The Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary*, p. x.
[31] Ibid., p. 70.
[32] Ibid., p. 70.
[33] Ibid., p. 70.
[34] Ibid., p. 70.

character.'[35] Some of these items are 'more or less complete booklets, bound up with other manuscripts in the Middle Ages, and though forming part of miscellanies now, were probably not planned as such from the beginning [...] the number of genuine miscellanies containing single *SEL* poems is rather small.'[36]

The major manuscripts range from manuscripts such as G (London, Lambeth Palace, MS 233) with a SE Derby orthography, i+297 folios, and 80 *SEL* entries, to K (Cambridge, King's College, MS 13) with a Gloucester orthography, 48 folios, and 13 *SEL* entries. The fragmentary manuscripts range from the extremely fragmentary, such as Rm (Ripon, Ripon Minster Fragment) which is one strip of parchment from a binding measuring approximately 300 x 41-54 mm containing lines from two *SEL* texts, to an incomplete manuscript of 123 folios (Br, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson 225) containing parts of 19 *SEL* entries as well as other hagiographic materials. Inevitably, there are extant fragments of the *SEL* that are not yet identified. In July 2017, Johanna Feenstra tweeted that she had identified a fragment containing the *SEL* St Dunstan in Leeds University Library.[37] In recent sale at Bonham's on 24th March 2015, fragments of the *SEL* were sold as Lot 21.[38] As research on fragments is increasing internationally, it might be hoped that more *SEL* material will be found in the future.

Görlach's decision to group the *SEL* materials into separate categories is a practical one – it allows for quick identification of the *SEL's* function and structure within a particular manuscript. The drawback to these divisions is, however, that only 25

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[35] Ibid., p. 70.
[36] Ibid., p. 71.
[37] @JohannaFnstra, '@LULGalleries Found this frag. has a large portion of St. Dunstan of the South English Legendary on it. Spelling is different.. #imc2017,' 8:51am, 7 July 2017.
[38] Bonham's Auction 24th March 2015, Lot 21.

manuscripts gain designation as 'major' manuscripts, perhaps causing readers to place a lower value on the other manuscripts of interest. Of course, Görlach's motivations for categorizing a 'major' manuscript depended upon what the manuscript reveals about the *SEL*'s textual transmission, he is less concerned with how the *SEL* texts were read and received, yet for the purposes of this research, the miscellany and fragmented manuscripts are equally as significant. Indeed, the 'fragments' and 'miscellanies' often do function within a specific devotional context that reveals the tendency to collect and collate texts for defensive purposes.

Redactions

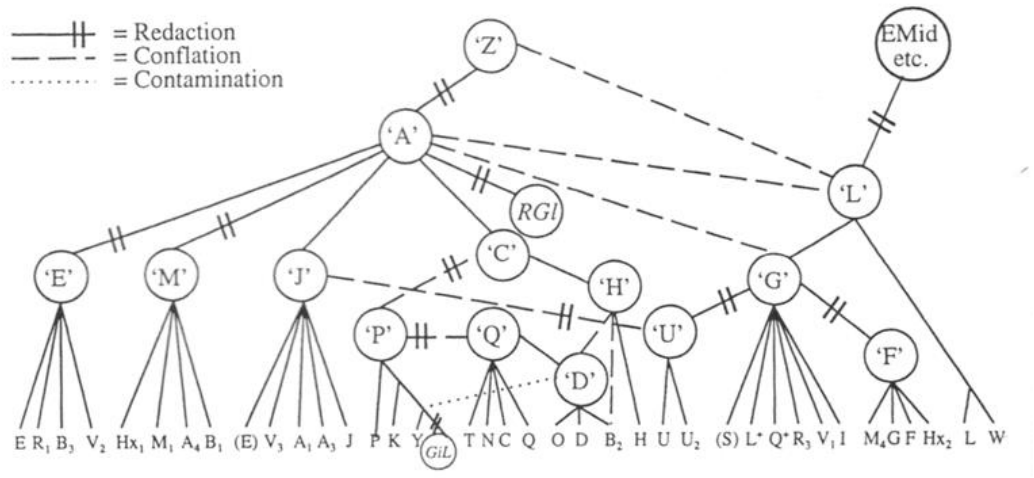

Fig. 4.1.: Affiliations of the major *SEL* texts. Ill-defined 'A': X, W_2, S, R_2; ill-defined 'C': A_2, 5; EMid = East Midland legends as discussed in 3.2. For sigils see pp.154-5.

Figure 14 Reproduced diagram of Görlach's textual affiliations from The Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary, p. 304.

Görlach proposes an origin for the *SEL* in a hypothetical 'Z' version (see Figure 14). This version, Görlach argues, must be later than 1260 because of 'the inclusion of

Peter the Dominican,'[39] and prior to the earliest surviving manuscript c. 1300. The *SEL* thereby dates to c. 1270-85, according to Görlach's calculations, in order to allow time for the 'complex textual history that lies behind these earliest manuscripts.'[40] Pickering has added to Görlach's discussion of the development of the Z version, that while '[t]he extent of this early version, Z, is uncertain [...] it appears to have set the pattern for the great majority of *SEL* MSS, namely of a single continuous cycle beginning at January 1st.'[41] Shortly after the 'Z' version, the text was redacted – the 'A' branch. The 'A' redaction influenced every extant manuscript witness.

Pickering has argued for two stages of the 'A-redaction'. His comments are worth quoting at some length here:

> We saw earlier, however, that the "A redactor" still grouped three of the movable feasts together when introducing them into the *sanctorale* cycle; that although he took some trouble to modify them to fit their new context, he was not wholly consistent; and that rather than provide substitutes for missing poems on Ascension Day and Whitsuntide, he attempted to justify their absence. Is the same man really likely to have supplied the extant *Circumcision* and *Epiphany*, and revised many of the saints' Lives in accordance with the *Legenda aurea*? We are faced here with the probability that what we have called "the A version" comprises two distinct stages of revision by two different writers, one an innovator, responsible for much composition and recomposition, the other - who inserted the movable feasts into the *sanctorale* cycle - an amalgamator. It is not easy to tell which of the two was active first.[42]

I see no compelling reason to disagree with Pickering's assessment of the evidence, but I am concerned here with Pickering's 'innovator,' or as I refer to them, the *Banna*-poet – the individual who added the *Banna* entry and imposed an agenda of defensiveness on the text. It is for this reason that I have avoided calling this individual the 'A-redactor,'

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[39] Görlach, *The Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary,* p. 38.
[40] Ibid., p. 38.
[41] Oliver S. Pickering, "The Expository Temporale Poems of the South English Legendary," *Leeds Studies in English* n.s. 1 (1978): 1–17, p. 11.
[42] Ibid., p. 11.

though they were active in the period of the 'A' redaction. It is widely accepted by scholars (Görlach and Pickering included),[43] that the arrival of the *Legenda Aurea,* a Latin hagiographical collection from c. 1263-67, from the Continent prompted the revision of the *SEL* by an 'A-redactor' (and the 'L' redactor, who conflated the 'A' and 'Z' traditions and likely had exempla from both). The 'A-redactors,' both Pickering's 'amalgamator' and the *Banna*-poet likely had access to a manuscript of the *Legenda Aurea,* which shaped their redactions and perhaps modelled for them what a 'collection' of saints' lives should look like.

Collections/ Selections/ Fragments

While discussion of the stemmatic affiliations between manuscripts provides much context for later discussion of manuscripts and their writers and readers, it is also important to consider the ways in which *SEL* materials were gathered together, and housed alongside differing material. Certain manuscripts, even those containing just one or two *SEL* entries, were frequently accompanied by other texts that inform their specific devotional program - to say 'miscellany' is perhaps misleading. For example, London,

[43] Görlach writes that: '[t]he evidence, then, suggests one of two possibe explanations: The "Z" author started translating an unknown pre-LgA legendary and encountered the LgA only when he had half finished his work. He then decided to continue with a text which he combined from his legendary and the LgA, either selecting complete legends from one of the two collections, or combining features according to his own preference. [...] The alternative explanation would be a complete early SEL, mainly, but not exclusively, based on a liturgical collection (a Worcester legenda). These texts were later revised after a LgA had become available ("Z2") [...] Both explanations imply that the LgA text became available at some point of the early history of an existing SEL collection.' Görlach, *The Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary*, pp. 27-8.

British Library, MS Add. 36983 (Qz) is categorized by Görlach as a miscellany and contains mainly Middle English items, including the *Cursor Mundi* (ff. 1ra-148vb), an incomplete text of the *Prick of Conscience* (ff. 159ra-174v), the Life of St. Dorothy from Bokenam's *Lives of Saints*', (f. 305v), ll. 1-50 of 'Passio Sancti Erasmi' (ff. 279v-280ra), and the *SEL* version of Michael III (ff. 255ra-261vb). Qz thereby seems to be a compilation with a general interest in the lives of saints, as well as history of Christendom. Another example is London, British Library, MS Cotton Caligula A II, which contains just two *SEL* entries; Jerome (ff. 135v-137) and Eustace (f. 137v). These lives come at the end of a substantial collection of material in Middle English, including eight romances and several lyrics attributed to Lydgate. The codex contains just one Latin text, the Cronica (f. 109-110), and it is written in a later hand. This compilation of Middle English materials is not unusual. It is common for manuscripts containing romances to also appear alongside religious lyrics, hagiography, and chronicles.

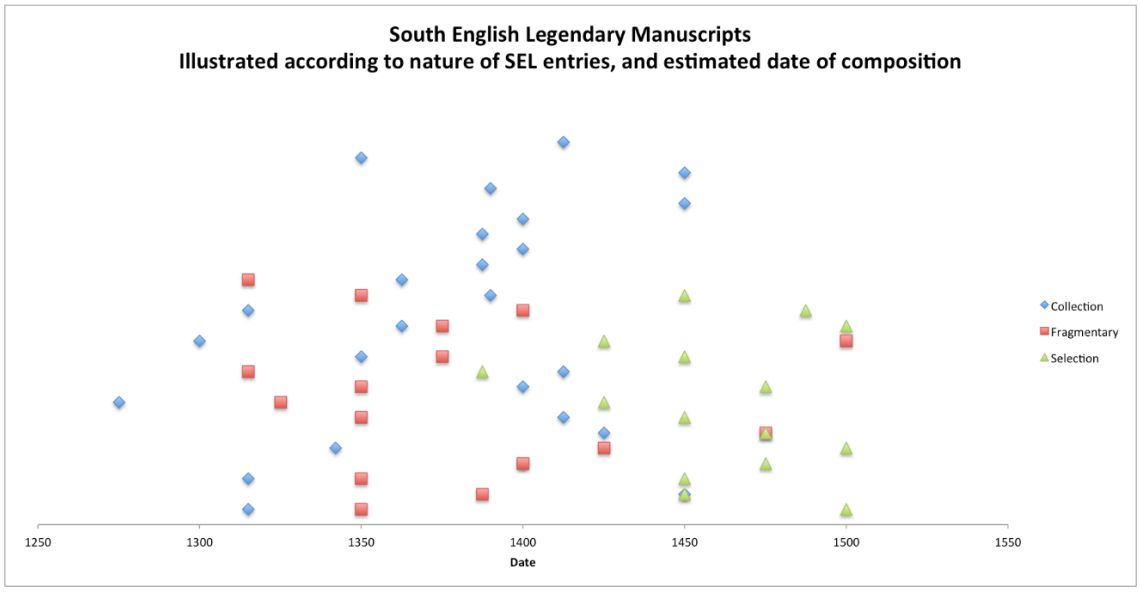

Figure 15 Graph of South English Legendary manuscripts illustrated according to the nature of the SEL entries (collection, fragmentary, or selection) and estimated date of composition. Compiled using information from Görlach's Textual Tradition of the SEL and personal additions. There is no y-axis (the vertical spacing is to allow the scatter to be more easily seen).

Yet, these categories can be very useful in other ways, although I have edited the terminology for accuracy - I choose to describe Görlach's 'miscellanies' as 'selections' as they are rarely true miscellanies, and 'major manuscripts' as *SEL* 'collections.' It is very useful to evaluate the distribution of manuscript type through time using these designations. For example, by evaluating the dates of surviving manuscripts through time, we can see just three extant manuscripts containing selected *SEL* entries survive from pre-1450 (see Figure 15). The remaining 12 surviving manuscripts date from 1450-1500. Meanwhile, no collected *SEL* manuscripts survive dating post-1450. The apparent decline of interest in manuscripts of collected *SEL* entries could well be because of the rise of other popular collections of saints' lives such as the *Gilte Legende* or *Legenda Aurea*. It could also show an increased willingness to treat the *SEL* entries with flexibility, and to step away from the framing promoted by the *Banna*-poet.

Examining the scripts across the range of manuscripts also reveals particular trends of copying, and can tell us something of the formality of this production (see Figure 17). Nineteen out of twenty-five of Görlach's 'major' manuscripts are written in an Anglicana script, which is hardly surprising since this is an English text with a strong interest in national saints and observances. Of the others, one fifteenth century manuscript is written in a Secretary hand (another English cursive), and five are copied in a Gothic bookhand (designated Textualis by Görlach), two of which have heavy Anglicana features. The 'Englishness' of this production is notable. Whether a 'collection,' a 'fragment,' or a 'selection,' Anglicana scripts still dominate the Graph (Figure 17). In line with the development of the English Secretary script, from the 1420's through the beginning of the sixteenth century, more manuscripts began to appear in

Secretary scripts, most commonly those containing selected *SEL* items in larger 'miscellanies.' The more formal Gothic bookhand, Textualis (or English Textura), does not represent any miscellany items, but eight complete and fragmentary SEL collections from between 1300 and 1400 (designated Textualis by Görlach, but commonly defined as Textura in English paleography). Despite relatively few *SEL* manuscripts copied in Gothic bookhands, a high-grade script usually associated with more deluxe productions, it should not be assumed that there were no deluxe *SEL* manuscripts. Indeed, the variation

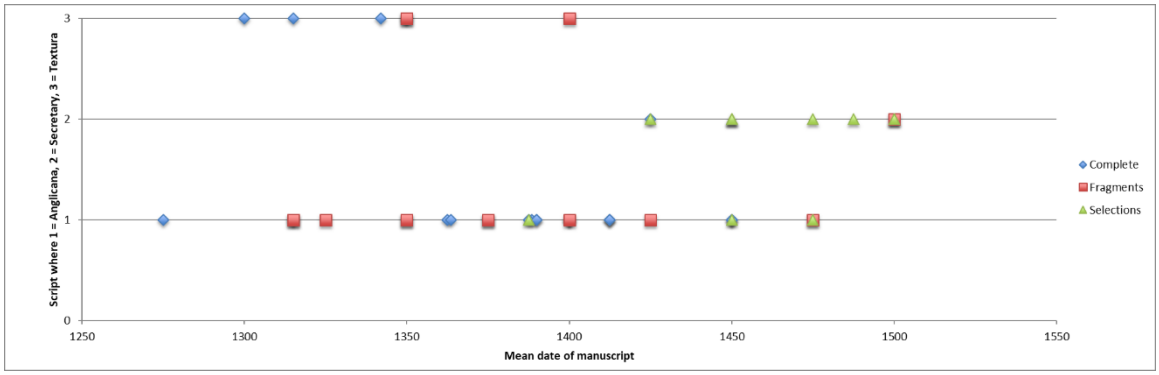

Figure 16 Graph to show the distribution of scripts in major SEL manuscripts across time. On the y-axis, 1 = Anglicana, 2 = Secretary, 3 = Textualis/ English Textura.

in grade of book production evidenced by the *SEL* manuscript is striking, with both low-grade productions, and some of the most deluxe of any Middle English composition. The best known is the Vernon manuscript (V), a gargantuan 3-column production of 414 folios, with texts ranging from *Piers Plowman* to prayers and lyrics, written in a tidy Anglicana bookhand and heavily illuminated. This dissertation mostly focuses on the conception of the text drawn by the *Banna*-poet and therefore the 'complete' manuscripts (those made up of an organized collection of *SEL* entries), however, these selections often show the influence of defensive reading.

While the discussion of the *SEL*'s stages of textual transmissions naturally draws us to think of 'redactors' and 'writers' - the individuals actively constructing the text we

call the *SEL* - this somewhat neglects the actions of scribes and compilers whose *selections* changed the course of the *SEL*'s copying. Much of the debate surrounding the *SEL* has focused on the textual development of the *SEL*. Whether the text was conceived as a 'whole', and edited by redactors through time, or whether it was constructed fluidly with lives added piecemeal, is something that has heavy implications for both the audience and uses of the text.

Approaches

To abandon the redactionist approach entirely is to fail to acknowledge the long-lasting impact the ‘prologue’ (the *Banna*) had on the *SEL*, after all, the *Banna* begins the *SEL* material in eight manuscripts, and appears in other positions in ten other manuscripts. This is not to say that there could not have been more than one individual involved in the process of the A-redaction, of which the *Banna* is a part,[44] but rather that it seems highly likely that it was the *Banna*-poet who added an allegorical defensive framework onto the *SEL*.

Two main approaches have been put forward for theorizing the development of the text, the 'redactionist' and 'fluid corpus' approach. The redactionist approach is that which we have already seen demonstrated by the study of manuscript affiliations undertaken by Görlach. Görlach's premise, from which he bases his study of manuscript relationships, is that ‘while a collection like the *SEL* must obviously be considered as a whole, the only

[44] See Pickering, “The Expository Temporale Poems of the South English Legendary.”

approach at once thoroughly feasible seems to be a close study of the genesis, sources, and later development of a single legend.'[45] However, while Görlach does claim that the *SEL* 'must obviously be considered a whole,' his redactionist approach has been somewhat overstated by his critics. He does acknowledge a degree of fluidity in the development of the *SEL*:

> It is *a priori* likely that the first 'translator' and compiler followed a model, but major differences in the length and in the style of the existed *SEL* legends and homiletic pieces suggest that the poems derive from different source collections, and were probably translated by different authors. This hypothesis would imply that the collections(s) must for some time have been considered as 'open texts' with no closely defined scope, from which omissions could be made, or to which new legends could be added at the pleasure of the individual user, or whenever the collection was put to a new use or transferred to a difference diocese.[46]

At the same time, Görlach's approach fundamentally relies on the historic existence of a 'Z' version of the *SEL*.

Boyd was a contemporary critic of Görlach's approach and challenged his redactionist approach, she was one of the earliest scholars to put forward what is now described as a 'fluid corpus approach,'[47] which, broadly speaking, understands the construction of the *SEL* as flexible according to the needs of a particular patron, community, or audience. She summarizes that 'the ecclesiastical writings now called the *South English Legendary*, extant in many manuscripts which differ in contents, arrangements, style, and dialect, are better described as a corpus of versified Middle

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[45] Görlach, *The Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary,* p. 1.
[46] Ibid., p. 6.
[47] Marshall has identified the work challenging Görlach as a 'fluid corpus' approach in her recent dissertation. Marshall, "Literary Codicologies: The Conditions of Middle English Textual Production, c. 1280-1415," p. 81.

English writings for the ecclesiastical year than as a single work.'[48] In drawing this conclusion, Boyd challenged the editorial techniques of Horstmann and D'Evelyn and Mill, and dismissed Görlach's research as lacking significant conclusions.[49] Boyd argues against a manuscript tradition born out of recensions and redactions, and instead proposes a manuscript tradition based on what she describes as 'fragments.' She writes, 'much of the confusion surrounding the contents of these manuscripts may lie in the possibility that they were made from fragments representing both an original *liber festivalis* and at least one revision.'[50] It seems of little doubt that a collection of saints' lives would be adapted according to the audience, but Boyd's argument differs in that it seems to approach the collection of *sanctorale* and *temporale* items as not only adapted, but created 'according to the calendar of one diocese or religious community [...which in turn] invited revision to include new lections, and perhaps to exclude texts might have received literary revision in the process.'[51] Boyd's examination of L gives the most concrete example of how she understands the concept of the fluid corpus; she writes that 'MS. Laud 108 in its disordered condition merely records miscellaneous texts as the scribe found them, while MS. Harley 2277, doubtless independent of MS. Laud 108 since it does not contain all the Laud materials, represents an attempt to reassemble such texts into calendar order.'[52]

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[48] Beverly Boyd, "A New Approach to the 'South English Legendary,'" *Philological Quarterly* 47 (1968): 494–98, p. 498.
[49] Boyd writes in her review of Görlach's *Textual Tradition*, 'the author's conclusions are lost in an obscure style and in a critical apparatus so complicated as to defy readability [...] it is difficult to find in his data evidence for his conclusions; indeed, the conclusions are not easy to identify.' Beverly Boyd, "Review of Manfred Görlach's 'The Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary,'" *Speculum* 52 (1977), p. 678.
[50] Beverly Boyd, "New Light on the 'South English Legendary,'" *Texas Studies in English* 37 (1958): 187–94, p. 194.
[51] Ibid., p. 193.
[52] Ibid., p. 194.

Marshall perhaps simplifies Boyd's position when she claims that Boyd replaced 'the redactionist approach with one that figured the *SEL* as a large and changeable corpus of items, dependent upon the needs and interests of the local audience.'[53] Here, Boyd is identifying that there is no 'set corpus' for *SEL* materials, *not* that there was not particular versions of lives associated with a particular circulating collection of hagiographic materials.

Following in Boyd's footsteps, Liszka and Pickering have questioned Görlach, Horstmann, and D'Evelyn and Mill's approach to the textual transmission of the *SEL*. Liszka particularly has challenged Hortsmann and D'Evelyn and Mill in their presentation of a singular collection. Liszka writes, '[a]s a result of [Horstmann's] *selection,* and of his edition's appearance of completeness, and finally of the *sanctorale's* becoming identified as a literary work with a name, most subsequent scholars have accepted the *sanctorale* potion of the *SEL de facto,* as the complete collection.'[54] Yet, Horstmann openly acknowledges the existence of the *temporale,* writing that '[t]he *temporale* is complete in none of these MSS'[35] (CAHESTVG), and himself even shows some indication of an appreciation for the 'fluid corpus' approach, which had not yet been defined: '[t]he Collection grew slowly, and expanded by degrees, round a first nucleus; it was the work of many decades of years, of many collaborators, most likely the joint work of a whole abbey, that of Gloucester, where the plan seems to have been fixed and brought into

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[53] Marshall, "Literary Codicologies: The Conditions of Middle English Textual Production, c. 1280-1415," p. 81.
[54] Liszka, 'The South English Legendaries,' in Blurton and Wogan-Browne, *Rethinking the South English Legendaries,* p. 34.
[35] Horstmann, *The Early South-English Legendary, or, Lives of Saints,* p. ix.

definite shape.'[55] Importantly though, Horstmann argues that the intended outcome, despite the fluid growth, was the production of a planned and singular work.

Liszka's main objections to the treatment of the *SEL* in scholarship has been the neglect of the *temporale* entries, which he argues once formed an independent section to the *sanctorale.* Liszka writes that 'the orderly sections of the *sanctorale*, together with other physical evidence from the manuscript, suggest instead that the compiler experimented with at least two systems of calendar order previous to the one indicated by the Laud prologue.'[56] Yet, Liszka acknowledges the challenges inherent in trying to edit a text like the *SEL*, writing that '[t]he variety among the various *temporale* collections would even today make it difficult, perhaps impossible, for an editor to select one particular collection, if that editor hoped to present a definitive *South English temporale* collection.'[57] Liszka is critical of the purely redactionist approaches championed by Boyd, and the editorial decisions of Horstmann and D'Evelyn and Mill, though part of his objection appears to be that there cannot be just one edition. Of course, the logistical difficulties inherent in producing more than one edition cannot be overcome by Liszka's objections to a singular *SEL*. While Liszka writes that '[t]o the later *SEL* compilers, the *SEL* was an open text, one that not merely could, but should be improved, adapted, and suited to local use [...] there were produced many *South English Legendaries*,'[58] the

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[55] Ibid., p. viii.
[56] Thomas R. Liszka, "MS Laud. Misc. 108 and the Early History of the South English Legendary," *Manuscripta* 33, no. 2 (July 1, 1989): 75–91, pp. 75-6.
[57] Liszka, 'The South English Legendaries,' in Blurton and Wogan-Browne, *Rethinking the South English Legendaries*, p. 29.
[58] Liszka, 'The South English Legendaries,' in Ibid., p. 41.

implication is nevertheless that, at one stage or another, there was *a SEL* from which the tradition was born.

William Robins in his recent article 'Modular Dynamics' proposes a new theory of textual evolution that lies somewhere between the redactionist approaches of Görlach and the fluid corpus approaches of Boyd and Pickering. He attempts to take the, 'middle way so much as to suggest that a dynamic interplay between item and collection is an ineluctable aspect of the textual domain that we call the *South English Legendary*.'[59] Indeed, for a *liber festivalis*, it is little surprising that the short, flexible entries were particularly suited to recopying and extraction to fit new devotional purposes. Robin's describes a 'textual system,' one which encourages certain groupings of *SEL* entries to circulate together - a tradition that 'comes down to us in a large number of manuscript compilations, which range from sizeable volumes that contain only items from the *SEL* corpus, to small miscellanies that include a small sampling of *SEL* material.'[60] He goes on to say, '[t]he proliferation of texts seems to have occurred at all phases in the tradition's history. It served as a counter-tendency to an opposing principle of consolidation, whereby the ensemble could come to seem closed, or whereby particular configurations could be taken as normative.'[61] The textual trajectory of the *SEL*, Robins argues, was both shaped by the accumulative effect and generative effect of new production, and restrained by the literal way in which most manuscripts are copied.[62] Responding to the popularization of Görlach's redactionist approaches, William Robbins

[59] Robins, 'Modular Dynamics in the *South English Legendary'* in Ibid., p. 193.
[60] Robins, 'Modular Dynamics,' in Ibid., p. 185.
[61] Robins, 'Modular Dynamics,' in Ibid., p. 196.
[62] Copied, for example, from one scribe copying the work of another, and in doing so, producing a 'history of versions.'

writes, 'I suspect that redactionist accounts of the *SEL* have been overstated: their central claims, which are presented as philologically based deductions, often seem fore-ordained by methodological assumptions; privileging the well-ordered compilation as the basic textual unit tends to lead to self-validating results,' yet goes on to say that he cannot fully accept Boyd's position that the, 'textual domain of the *SEL* is more than a corpus of discrete poems.'[63]

For my part, I contend that the stance of every major player in this debate has been overstated - Görlach is not so 'redactionist' as his critics assume, Liszka and Pickering may not consider themselves to fully fit within the categorization of 'fluid corpus' as they might suggest either. It is not so straight-forward as Görlach might inadvertently imply with his diagrams of manuscript affiliations, yet not so fluid as to be floating mass of hagiographic entries that scribes or patrons *selected* at random. Appreciating that the *SEL*, particularly the *sanctorale* portion, is adaptable according to the demands of a particular audience is essential to understanding the basic function of any collection of saints' lives.

Whether one subscribes to the redactionist or fluid corpus approach, or to Robins' more nuanced idea of 'modular dynamics,' it is undeniable that individuals impacted the transmission of the *SEL*. In this dissertation, it is these individuals, and one in particular, that I am interested in. While I subscribe to the idea that the *SEL* developed by narrative accretion per the edits of individual readers, compilers, and writers, I argue the *Banna*-poet guided the framing of the *SEL* for future editors. While we frequently consider this

[63] Robins, 'Modular Dynamics,' in Ibid., p. 205.

figure as, principally, a writer, a compiler, and an innovator, the *Banna*-poet is infrequently valued for his status as a 'reader.' The way in which this individual read and understood the collection of *temporale* and *sanctorale* material, in order to accrue and produce new material must mean that, for one reader at least, it was considered a 'text' that was both in production, and existed as a reality. And the compilatory efforts of compilers do not end with any one redactor either, or even with *SEL*-only volumes. A number of manuscripts attest to the extraction and *selection* of *SEL* entries, either singularly or as part of a small collection of *SEL* material.

Collecting Saints' Lives

In many ways, the nature of the *SEL* itself represented something of a unique opportunity for its patrons, consumers, and producers; its very structure encouraged personalization, its short and numerous entries allowed adaptability. The cult of saints developed as a phenomenon that was adaptable to the needs of individuals and groups, hence the patronage of saints that came to represent and dominate certain cults. Many features of the cult of the saints speak to the desire to 'collect'; pilgrimage badges record shrines visited, relics were gathered as collections, indulgences were sought from pilgrimages, and lives were collected in legendaries.[64] The *SEL*'s transmission history is particularly revealing of the processes of collecting – evidently the purpose of this collection of lives in textual form was for the edification of its audience, whether through

[64] Perhaps even *The Canterbury Tales*, satirical in its treatment of saints, is inspired in its collection of tales by legendary treatment of saints.

preaching or reading. Furthermore, the presence of substantial *temporale* material provides some indication of the role this text may have had in the devotional lives of its readers.

The *SEL* is undoubtedly a collection. It *collects* saints' lives together, often in single volumes containing *SEL* items only (ABCEG etc.). Yet, in almost every manuscript, the codicology of the book draws attention to the individuality and separation of each legend. Manuscripts use rubrics to separate the legends, marking their modularity. While Robbins has drawn attention to the ability of the entries to stand alone, and as a whole, his use of manuscript evidence is sparse. Codicological features that would support his argument, such as the rubrication and separation of each entry in the majority of manuscript witnesses, are not included in the analysis. In many ways the isolation, or rather the modulation, of each unit mimics the collecting tendencies of other devotional objects. Just as the *arma Christi* are isolated into devotional units both visually and thematically, the textual units found in the *SEL* allow for a defensive reading. This is not only true for manuscripts containing *SEL* items only, but also for volumes with *selected SEL* entries. The texts that circulate individually seem to represent certain reading patterns, appearing frequently with the same or related texts across different manuscripts. The appearance of the *SEL* in both anthologies as a collection, and as individual entries, can represent deliberately constructed reading programs. Certain saints, whether through their lives or deaths, suit anthological collections, and in the *SEL* this is most evident in the copying of the St Michael entry in collections containing medical and astrological entries.

2. Reading Redactions

Now blouweþ þe niwe frut . þat late bygan to spring
Þat to is kunde eritage . mankunne schal bringe
Þis nywe frut of wan ich speke . is oure Cristendom
Þat late was an eorþe ysouwe . & later forþ it com (ll. 1-4, p. 1).[65]

These lines are perhaps the most well known, and most oft-quoted, of any from the *South English Legendary.* They form the first of the *SEL*'s so-called 'prologue' (or *Banna*), and build both momentum and anticipation as the reader is placed at the center of a historical narrative that oscillates between past, present, and future. The history of Christendom, as 'nywe frut,' grows and regenerates, shifting the sense of the *Banna's* temporality. Establishing both an authorial voice using the singular personal pronoun ('of whan *ich* speke'), and invoking the audience as participants through the inclusive use of the possessive, third person 'oure,' they place the reader centrally in the action, as members of the community of Christendom that was 'ysouwe' (*sewn*) on earth. The poetic achievements of the *Banna* have been much praised, and these lines reveal the voice of our *Banna*-poet.[66] The reader, as a part of the budding Christendom the poet describes,

[1] Thompson translates these lines as; 'Now blooms the new fruit that lately began to grow, / The fruit that will bring mankind to its true inheritance; / This new fruit that I speak of is our Christendom, / That was so lately sown on earth and afterwards came forth.' Thompson, *Everyday Saints and the Art of Narrative in the South English Legendary*, p. 4.
[66] For example, see Liszka, 'The A-Redaction,' in which he writes, '[w]e have previously appreciated the "A" "Prologue" as a great poetic improvement on the "Z" prologue. In its largest part it is composed of an intricate, beautiful extension of two comparisons.' Liszka, "The First 'A' Redaction of the 'South English Legendary,'" p. 408.

gains associations with nature, growth, and new life. The poet develops the pastoral metaphors associating Christendom with nature through the theme of God as gardener through lines 7-15 ('God him was þe gardiner . þat gan ferst þe sed souwe / Þat was Iesus Godes sone . þat þare fore alyȝte louwe' l. 7-8, p. 1). God tends to the 'sed' (*seed*) that is watered by Christ's blood ('Þat hare blod and hare lyf ȝaf . to norisschi þat swete sed' l. 18, p. 1). Yet, pastoral metaphor soon gives way to military metaphors that cast the 'appostles' and 'martir[s]' of line 17 as 'oure Louerdes knyȝtes' in line 19.

The description of the saints as *our Lord's knights* signals a shift in tone and the beginning of a new poetic metaphor in which all the saints engage in fierce spiritual battles. Stitching together the popular thirteenth century themes of the pastoral and the romantic, the poet styles the saints as militaristic role-models with contemporary appeal. The proceeding 49 lines elaborate the metaphor of the saints' as warriors fighting for Christ. The speaker self-consciously acknowledges their role as tellers of tales of knights and warriors:

> Wo so wilneþ muche to hure . *tales* of suche þinge
> *Hardi batailles* he may hure . here þat nis no lesinge
> Of apostles & martirs . þat *hardy kniȝtes* were
> Þat studeuast were in *bataille* . & ne fleide noȝt for fere[...]
> Telle *ichelle* bi reuwe of ham (ll. 61-66a, p. 3, *my emphasis*).

Repeatedly, emphasis is placed on the purpose of the *SEL*, conceived of as a complete textual unit, as effectively a collection of battle poems about 'hardy kniȝtes.' As I will demonstrate, this thematic overview informs the whole of the *SEL* as a series of tales of steadfast saintly warriors. No specific instructive, devotional, or edifying intention is made explicit, there is no mention of the intended audience, the text is simply for those

'[w]o so wilneþ muche to hure.' While the *Banna* says nothing of the composition, or purpose of the *SEL* as a legendary collection, the poet supplies the voice of an authoritative story-teller ('Telle ichelle'). While this authorial voice does not appear in the majority of *sanctorale* and *temporale* items, the poet, in the *Banna,* assigns a thematic purpose to a perceived collection. The addition of the *Banna* is an attempt to self-contain the legendary items as a complete collection, one worthy of copying as a 'book of saints' lives and feasts' to be read for defense.

The mightiest warrior of all is, of course, Christ. Rosemary Woolf writes of the *exemplum* that:

> A common metaphor for the Passion in patristic times was that of a battle and by a convenient merging of the metaphors Christ is then imagined as a husband, who fights to win back his faithless wife from her lover or abductor, the Devil. Though this combination is found already in the Biblical exegesis of St. Augustine, it did not become a commonplace in religious writing until it acquired a literary analogue in medieval romance; and with the help of this analogue it ceased to be merely dogmatically apt and became also emotionally persuasive.[67]

The *SEL*, which acknowledges that it is in part a response to romance, adopts elements of the *exemplum* in its framing of the *SEL* narrative. Woolf notes that the, 'earliest occurrence of the *exemplum* is the famous and beautiful version in the *Ancrene Wisse*. The earliest related lyrics, however, belong to the end of the thirteenth century. In both forms Christ the lover-knight was a popular theme.'[68] The voice of Christ, in *Ancrene Wisse*, tells his lover of the depth of his sacrifice: 'Ich chulle, for þe luue of þe, neome þet

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[67] Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages*, p. 45.
[68] Ibid., p. 46.

feht upo me, ant arrude þe of ham þe þi deað secheð.'[69] In many ways, this *exemplum* manifests the affective-militaristic imagery I wish to elaborate.

The imagery of Christ as lover-knight was popular as a topic of vernacular sermons in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Cambridge, CUL, MS Gg 6.26, depicts Aeneas battling for a lady, his sister. The text records, 'Noþirþelasse þis noble knyght so entireli luffid his sustyr þat to sett hir agayn in hir landes and possessiouns he made hemselfe pore and agayn hir enmy helde a grete batell [...] þis knygt callid Eneas is allmyti God.'[70] In response to the Aeneas-Christ battle, Andrew Galloway notes, the preacher instructs his readers to 'seize the day to respond with our confession and, as the imagery of giving throughout the sermon implies, perhaps with other pious donations as well.'[71] The call to confession is typical of sermons post-1215. Yet, the comparison to the *Banna* is not entirely easy – the *SEL's* primary objective does not appear to be a call to confession. Rather, it encourages its readers to identify the Christian enemy, and do battle with that enemy through defensive reading.

The *SEL* occassionally asks its readers to engage emotionally with saintly suffering, and is therefore, in part, affective. The saints suffer through tortures during which they defend themselves from an array of offensive weapons through proclamations of their faith. Lazikani notes that '[the *SEL*] is saturated with the infliction of pain: the exact weapons used to cause pain are detailed, and torture scenes are explicit and

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[69] Millett, *Ancrene wisse*. VII:3, p. 147.
[70] Andrew Galloway, "A Fifteenth-Century Confession Sermon on 'Unkyndeness' (CUL MS Gg 6.26) and Its Literary Parallels and Parodies," *Traditio* 49 (January 1994): 259–69. Sermon edited by Galloway from: Cambridge, CUL, GG 6.26, fols. 22v-23, p. 266.
[71] Ibid., p. 260.

lengthy.'[72] The graphic descriptions are indeed striking. Saints battle physical and spiritual threats, and their weapons are symbolic objects and spiritual actions/ rituals. We have already seen through the 'O Vernicle' and *arma Christi* traditions that these weapons go beyond the allegorical in the later Middle Ages to include text and images perceived to be amuletic. The *SEL* lies at the juncture of this tradition. The presence of affective language does not, however, exclude a defensive reading. Rather, it refines the reading process, encouraging the reader to focus this emotional meditation on spiritual defense, to use the *vitae* as spiritual shields. The *Banna*-poet offers a reading of the *vitae* as such, defining their purpose as accounts of holy warriors in his poetry entry, the *Banna.*

The Prologues

The *Banna* is not the only entry that now vies for recognition as the *SEL's* prologue. Nestled between the entry for St Thomas Becket and St Fabian in L are several lines that arguably present a more coherent prologic construction than the *Banna* (between six and twenty-six lines, depending on whether one designates Fabian a separate entry). Usually described as the Laud or "Z" prologue, it introduces the idea of an *SEL* collection/ text:

> AL *þis bok* is a-maked of *holi dawes* : and of *holie mannes liues*
> Þat soffreden for ore louerdes loue : pinene manie and riue,
> Þat ne spareden for none eiȝe : godes weorkes to wurche ;
> Of ȝwas liues ȝwane heore feste fallez : *men redez in holi churche.*

[72] Lazikani, *Cultivating the Heart,* p. 52.

Þei ich of alle ne mouwe nouȝt telle : ichulle telle of some,
Ase euerech feste after oþur : In þe ȝere doth come. -
Þe furste þat in þe ȝere comez : we cleopiez ȝeres-dai,
Ase ore louerd was circumciset (ll. 1-8, p. 177, Horstmann, *my emphasis*).[73]

The lines acknowledge the *sanctorale* entries of the *SEL* containing 'holie mannes liues', as well as the *temporale* cycle ('holi dawes'). The reference to 'þis bok' imposes cohesion on a collected 'book' of holy readings that 'men redez in holi churche.' The speaker goes on to explain that a *selection* of saints lives and holy days ('some') will be given in calendrical order ('Ase euerech feste after oþur'). There is no hint of reading for spiritual defense, indeed little instruction is given at all, but the martyrs 'soffreden for ore louerdes loue' aligns this version with popular didactic literature.

MS L, the basis for Horstmann's edition of the *Early South English Legendary*, is frequently noted for its structural disorder. While early scholars believed L to lack any calendraical order, Liszka disagrees and in his article 'MS Laud Misc. 108' lays out a suggested composition history of L.[74] He notes that that 'the manuscript seems compiled from several such working compilations which have been fitted together more or less successfully.'[75] Identifying 'blocks' of organized material within L, Liszka points to a disjointed acquisition of source material. The complexity of L's construction is significant because it provides a sense of the early transmission of the *SEL*. The five booklets identified by Liszka represent the steady accumulation of this manuscript over time, and

[73] Horstmann, *The Early South-English Legendary, or, Lives of Saints,* p. 177.
[74] Liszka, "MS Laud. Misc. 108 and the Early History of the South English Legendary." On the lack of structural unity, Liszka observes, '[s]everal critics, especially early ones, thought it was a randomly *selected* and arranged collection,' p. 75. Liszka points to John E. Wells (1926, 294), Gerould (1916, 152), and Boyd (1958, 193-4) in footnote 3 on p. 85.
[75] Ibid., p. 83.

booklet 3 represents a stage in the construction of the manuscript. Liszka's proposed booklets 1 and 2 contain a *temporale* item each (the Ministry and Passion followed by the Infancy of Jesus), and then booklet 3 continues with *sanctorale* items beginning with St Quiriac and the Invention of the Cross.[76] With the exception of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, this booklet proceeds calendrically in quire 3 through the *sancorale* items for May and early June (St Barnabas). Quire 4 contains scattered entries for June, July, August, March, and October, but quire 5 concludes with five entries in calendrical order for late September and October. Booklet 4 continues the entries from St Katherine (Nov. 25), through December. At quire 8, it seems that the scribe located an exemplar that covered the beginning of the year, and concludes the entry for St Thomas Becket before continuing with January *sanctorale* and *temporale* items according to the "A" redaction. In this way, L attests to Görlach's hypothesized "A" and "Z" traditions, demonstrating a stage in which exemplars from both families were adopted.

In most respects, these few lines fulfill our expectations of a prologue; they present the *SEL* as a complete textual unit, they incorporate a justification for *temporale* and *sanctorale* narratives together, and they define a rationale for the organizational structure of the entries. Indeed, the L prologue fulfills all expectations except that which is perhaps most significant - the lines, as they appear in their only surviving witness, L, are not placed at the beginning of the *SEL*. Rather, as Görlach summarizes, they occur 'mid-volume, but preceding a number of texts of the January to March portion.'[77] Despite the introductory nature of the lines, Liszka, upon close examination of the entry within its

[76] See Ibid. pp.89-91 for Liszka's full construction hypothesis of L.
[77] Görlach, *The Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary*, p. 6

manuscript context, has remarked that 'its presentation in the manuscript makes one question whether the Laud compiler regarded it as a prologue [... it] begins four lines from the bottom on a leaf, mid-volume and even mid-quire in the manuscript, without any special *incipit* or flourished initial.'[78] While Liszka's comments are correct, they are perhaps also a little misleading – the entry is still treated as an independent section, with a two-line initial with decorative penwork extending well into the lower margin of the page, preceeding January 1st.

While failing to begin the *SEL* collection in L, the lines clearly indicate the intention of the author that it be used as a prologue.[79] Görlach reads the inconsistency between the stated objective and the codicological evidence as scribal error, remarking that '[t]he last aim [of the L prologue] contrasts conspicuously with the existing disorder in L[...] the existing disorder must clearly be due to later scribes and compilers, including the scribe of MS L himself.'[80] Liszka writes that: 'if we assume that the Laud prologue was not among the compiler's first collection of source materials, we may accept the evidence of the Laud manuscript that a *temporale* section was intended to begin the original collection.'[81] So, the most compelling explanation for L's disorder is that the

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[78] Liszka, "MS Laud. Misc. 108 and the Early History of the South English Legendary," p. 81.
[79] Görlach and Liszka have both made suggestions to explain the odd placement of the entry. Pickering's views, which are now rather outdated, interpret L as lacking any organizing structure, and challenge the status of the L prologue as a prologue at all: Pickering would disagree, writing that '[t]o give MS L's 6-line prologue credence as the original prologue to the *SEL* would necessitates supposing that what we have called Z is in reality also made up of at least two layers of composition. L's prologue is clearly intended for a single collection of *holi dawes and holie mannes liues* beginning January 1st, not for one with a preceding group of poems on movable feasts.' See Pickering, "The Expository Temporale Poems of the South English Legendary," p. 11. The movement by Minnis and others to uncover some structural cohesion in L would now disagree with this.
[80] Görlach, *The Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary*, p. 7.
[81] Liszka, "MS Laud. Misc. 108 and the Early History of the South English Legendary," p. 84.

compiler was copying *SEL* materials as and when they became available. The *temporale* preceded the *sanctorale* at this stage, and the L prologue was intended to begin the *sanctorale* section. Liszka writes: 'L [...], the oldest of the surviving *SEL* manuscripts, gives evidence for [the order of 'movable feasts [...] temporale [...] sanctorale']. In this stage, also the movable feasts and temporale material preceded the "Z" prologue, preserved uniquely in L.'[82]

The L prologue most likely represents a stage of the *SEL* prior to, or in contemporary competition with, the 'A-redaction.' This short entry, however, gained neither footing nor popularity amongst the *SEL* compilers. Perhaps the *Banna*'s illusions to spiritual battle and its presentation of saints as warrior-heroes more successfully captured the popular reception of the *SEL*. Görlach speculates that the development and quick integration of the *Banna* into the *SEL* was due to a widening audience, noting that: '[i]t should, however, be noted that the absence of any reference to the liturgy and the scorn the "A" prologue pours on romances suggests a slightly different audience: the book, apart from other functions it is meant to serve, is offered as a pious substitute for the too worldly interests of people accustomed to listen to romances.'[83] Perhaps a disapproving clerical audience were copying the *SEL* and hoping to impose the superiority of the spiritual battle over the 'lesinge' (l. 62, p. 3) secular.

Both the *Banna* and the L prologue speak to an attempt to make the *SEL* a single literary 'text': the Laud prologue attempting to unify the collection as a 'bok [..] a-maked of holi dawes : and of holie mannes liues', and the *Banna* unifying the salvation history

[82] Liszka, "The First 'A' Redaction of the 'South English Legendary,'" p. 408.
[83] Görlach, *The Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary*, p. 7.

narrative through the extended image of saints' as knights embattled against evil. Despite the suitability of the L prologue for introducing a textual collection of saints' lives in calendrical order, and the fact that it was, indeed, the earlier 'prologue,' it did not gain footing and popularity amongst the *SEL* compilers. The *Banna,* on the other hand, survives in at least seventeen manuscripts,[84] and is found in the initial position in eight of the major manuscripts.[85] Of these eight (AJOQNTYD),[86] two of these manuscripts are amongst the earliest *SEL* witnesses, with A (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 43) dating from 1300-1330 and N (London, British Library, MS Egerton 2891) dating from 1310-1320. The remaining six major manuscripts date from the late fourteenth-, early fifteenth-century (JOQTYD). The earliest surviving manuscript, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108, dates from c. 1300, so the use of the *Banna* as introductory material was adopted very quickly. Despite this survival, Thomas Liszka has challenges the status of the *Banna* text as prologue, arguing that the *Banna* 'should be considered a prologue only to the final section of that work [the *sanctorale*]. In the context of the whole, it was a transitional piece.'[87] Although Liszka argues against the *Banna* as a prologue to the combined *sanctorale* and *temporale SEL,* he still ascribes it an introductory role,

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[84] Ibid., p. 133.

[85] Ibid., pp. 206-7. Also, note, Liszka comments that ''Of the twenty-six major manuscripts, six begin their collection with the *Banna sanctorum,* and several of the acephalous manuscripts appears to have done so as well'. Liszka, 'The *South English Legendaries*', in Blurton and Wogan-Browne, *Rethinking the South English Legendaries*. p. 36. See FN 32, p. 64 - 'MSS DCJQTY'. I have counted T and Y because, despite initial missing folios, codicological evidence suggests that the *Banna* was considered to be 'introductory' material - written at the beginning of a quire, T with a decorated border around the *Banna*, and Y introducing it with a large capital initial. Furthermore, without further evidence, there is nothing to suggest the missing quires contained *temporale* materials.

[86] Görlach, *The Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary,* pp. 6-7.

[87] Ibid., p. 409. Blurton and Wogan-Browne have following in this trend, noting the *Banna's* alternating locations and the variations in contemporary titles mean that '[a]s a prologue... this opening to the *SEL* is highly unstable, even by standards of medieval manuscript culture.' 'Introduction' in Blurton and Wogan-Browne, *Rethinking the South English Legendaries,* p. 5.

acknowledging the *Banna* is of 'artistic importance for supplying unity and theme to the collection.'[88] However, regardless of the intended positioning, the textual history of the *SEL* attests to the *Banna* serving as a prologue in a significant number of witnesses. Considering how fragmentary even some of the major manuscripts are, this number is significant, and it demonstrates, as Liszka himself has acknowledged, that the *Banna* frequently functioned as a prologue in "A" manuscripts. Therefore, while the L prologue introduced a thematic context before A, the introduction of the *Banna* shaped the *SEL* into a text for *reading*.

Most modern readers of the *SEL* are led to assume the *Banna* is the prologue to the *SEL* - D'Evelyn and Mill list the text as 'Prologue' in the contents, and position it as the first entry.[89] Despite the editors' gesture toward cautiousness – the heading preceding the entry titles it '[Banna Sanctorum],' and retains square brackets despite manuscript attestation to this title[90] – the text is still considered an introduction to the *SEL* collection. The concern for how to define the entry was presumably felt in the Middle Ages as today – the text is referred to as a prologue ('Prologus libri') in London, British Library, MS Cotton Julius C IX (J), in other witnesses it gains a variety of other headings, including

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[88] Liszka, "The First 'A' Redaction of the 'South English Legendary,'" p. 407. Also, Liszka writes that the Banna came to function as a prologue in many of the manuscripts that lack a *temporale* section and because we have become accustomed to thinking of the *South English Legendary* as a *sanctorale* collction, the fact that the *Banna sanctorum* was written to be a transition from the *temporale* to the *sanctorale* became obscured.' Liszka, 'The *South English Legendaries'* in Blurton and Wogan-Browne, *Rethinking the South English Legendaries,* p. 37.
[89] D'Evelyn and Mill, *The South English Legendary*, p. xi.
[90] A point Liszka notes when he writes, 'The collection begins with a prologue, in some manuscripts identified as the *Banna sanctorum*. It is not so titled in the Corpus Christi College manuscript. But the editors, nevertheless, have supplied the title in square brackets'. 'The *South English Legendaries*' in Blurton and Wogan-Browne, *Rethinking the South English Legendaries,* pp. 23-4.

‘Banna sanctorum,’ ‘Banna,’ ‘de natiuitate,’ ‘De baptismo qui dicitur nouus fructus.’[91] The contents list in MS L describes the entry as, ‘Þe Cristendam of þe World’, imbuing the entry with a capacious or even cosmic dimension, while MS V concentrates on the status of martyrs as *miles Christi* introducing the entry as 'Þat þe martires ben godes knytes’. The variety of ascribed titles testifies to the breadth of reception for this text, as well as contemporary efforts to make sense of the entries literary purpose within a context of the *SEL* collection. More broadly, it attests to the reception of *readers* – there would be no need to have such an entry for a preaching collection.

Whether the original *Banna*-poet intended the entry to be an introduction to the entire work, or just to the *sanctorale,* the themes of the *Banna* encompass wide-ranging allegorical topics that comfortably stand as introductory material for both the *sanctorale* and the *temporale.* The pastoral metaphor describing the creation and growth of Christendom could be, and likely was, interpreted as an introduction to the *temporale* entries, while the metaphor for Christ's knights is explicitly relevant to the *sanctorale* portion of the legendary. Liszka is aware that the *Banna* offers its readers an explicit place within the history of spiritual militarism, noting, ‘[t]he Christian audience is urged to take their places among the ‘kniȝtes of þe rerewarde,” appreciate the sacrifices their predecessors have made to hold up Christendom, and be prepared to make their own [...] such spiritual discipline and sustenance make the Christian soldier ready for the battle as it is waged in everyday life.'[92] Liszka rightly notes that the image of the everyday battle,

[91] Liszka notes all these titles in his essay, Liszka, “The First ‘A’ Redaction of the ‘South English Legendary,’” p. 408.
[92] Ibid., p. 412.

the constant battle for spiritual righteousness striven for by any good medieval Christian, is defined through the imagery of the *Banna*.

The text of the *Banna* itself remained remarkably stable, and provided a summary of the nature of the *SEL*, including specific comments on the role of saints as *miles Christi.* The thematic unity provided by the *Banna* makes for a suitably impressive introduction to the collection. The skillful interweaving of poetic metaphors that depict God as ‘þe gardiner . þat gan ferst þe sed souwe’ who waters the hostile land with Christ's 'hete blod,' with that of Christendom's salvation history as a battle fought by 'apostles & martirs . þat hardy kniȝtes were,'[93] imbues the text with a purpose. Instead of simply being a collection of saints lives for calendrical use, this entry transforms the historical trajectory of the *SEL* into a collection with a poetically cohesive text that tells of a Christian battle. It stresses the active and militaristic pursuit of faith of those ‘Þat stedfast were in bataile’ (l. 64a, p. 3), that is the battle for true faith that should be undertaken by every Christian. This is a message that imbues the entirety of the *SEL*, including each individual life, many of which are also militaristic in tone. Rather than being ‘unstable,’ this demonstrates the flexibility of the *Banna* to function according to the compiler’s objectives. Such objectives could range from uniting temporale and sanctorale parts, or simply introducing a text of sanctorale items. While it is possible that the 'prologue' was written as a transitional piece, it is equally as likely to have been an introduction simply to the sanctorale. The history of Christ's sacrifice and God's

[93] D’Evelyn and Mill, *The South English Legendary*, pp. 1-2.

plantation of the seed of faith would, after all, be a natural opening for any text in which saints' steadfastness of faith is the focus.

It is important to remember that, like most hagiography, the *SEL* in its pre-'A' stage was interested in saintly defense. For example, the entry for Ursula and the eleven thousand virgins, in which an army of virgins lead by Ursula are martyred while defending their chastity, is found in the earliest L manuscript and lacks compelling evidence for strong A influence. Görlach writes with regard to this entry that 'MS A and especially MS L show major corruptions, and the evidence for the "A" redaction is controversial.'[94] Yet, still the lines depict the vehement nature of saintly warfare: '[...] þis maidens imartred were / Þis enleue þousand maidens . and al þe companie' (ll.148-9, p. 447).[95] Yet, these earlier entries do not guide the reader in defensive reading and arguably lack a strong interest in military metaphor and symbolism. It is the apotropaic reading of the text that is delivered by the *Banna*-poet that makes the redactionary history of the *Banna*-poet so striking.

Battle Banners

The comparison of Christ's knights to secular knights in the *Banna* is vivid and elaborate, and the image of the banners and battle lines intricately drawn: 'yuore he set is

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[94] Görlach, *The Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary*, p. 197.
[95] As Saunders has observed, 'the power of the virgin opposes an entire enemy host: [...][Ursula] is finally cut down on the battlefield with her companions. Corinne Saunders, 'Women and Warfare in Medieval English Writing,' in Corinne J. Saunders, Françoise H. M. Le Saux, and Neil Thomas, *Writing War: Medieval Literary Responses to Warfare* (Woodbridge: Brewer, 2004), p. 208.

albasters . and is archers also / Is trumpours to scheuwe wat he is . & is baner perto' (ll. 25-26, p. 2). The ultimate reversal of the metaphor is reached when Christ's battle is described in the same tactical and militaristic terms as a secular battle, 'In pis manere oure swete Louerd [...] sette verst byuore / His trompours and is alblasters [...]' (ll. 32-34, p. 2). The *Banna*-poet, aware of his readers' appetite for tales of battles, love, and chivalry effectively substitutes the tales of saints into this mold. The image of battle, the banner, is repeated frequently as Christ's knights, the saints, are ascribed military symbols to designate their status as defenders of Christendom.[96]

The boundaries between imagery of secular warfare and spiritual battle became blurred from the mid-thirteenth century. While the *Banna*-poet's persistent references to battle banners absorb the image of secular warfare into a grander purpose of spiritual battle, images images of the *arma Christi* were placed within heraldic shields in the fifteenth century as symbols of Christ, ultimate knight and defender, replacing secular militarism. While reference to the Pauline armor of God are frequent in medieval literature, repeated references to the banners of battle are not. Carrying a banner into battle was a significant symbol of the forthcoming fight. Easily visible on the battlefield, the military banner served as the rallying call for soldiers. The Order of the Knights Templar, the military order whose professed purpose was the protection of pilgrims in the Holy Land, infamously carried a banner displaying a cross - the symbol of Christ's crucifixion. Just as with the heraldic shields of the *arma Christi*, the choice of the cross

[96] This is something Liszka notes when he writes: 'The *Banna Sanctorum* depicts the collection metaphorically as a procession of the Old Testament patriarchs and prophets, Christ, and the saints marching in triumph under military banners.' Thomas R. Liszka, "The Dragon in the 'South English Legendary': Judas, Pilate, and the 'A(1)' Redaction," *Modern Philology* 100, no. 1 (2002): 50–59, p. 54.

was made not only to signify the type of war the knights believed themselves to be fighting, but also to add apotropaic power to the object of battle. As Christ arrives for the battle, John the Baptist, 'armed hym þo þere / Anon as an hardy kyng . his baner lette arer / Sein Ion was is baneour . and is baner bar byuore / And faste faȝt as an hardy kniȝt' (ll. 47-50).[97] St John, as squire, not only arms his knight, but proceeds before Christ as representation of a banner, before fighting steadfastly as a 'hardy knight.' For Christ, St John both bears and becomes a banner, rallying troops in support of a Christ knight/ King. As a text, the *Banna* entry does this too. Not only does it define the type of battle that should be fought by all members of Christendom, but it is also representative of a banner itself. It is a rallying call for all Christendom to take up arms and become soldiers in this military fight.

Banners were carried in procession as symbols of military power and devotion to saints. The feast of Rogationtide, which in 'Z' was likely part of the separate *temporale* section (though is not found in L),[98] follows the entry for St Mark in the 'A' versions. Rogationtide processions staged an allegorical battle between Christ and the Christian enemy (here, Pilate represented by a dragon pitted against a lion representing Christ), and there is perhaps no greater reminder of the significance of defensive ritual to the medieval Christian. The procession invoked the protection of the saints by parading their relics through the community, frequently marking the boundary of the parish with the protective act of 'beating-the-bounds' – the practice symbolically demarkates the

[97] D'Evelyn and Mill, *The South English Legendary*, p. 2-3.
[98] Görlach writes of Rogationtide that 'in the "Z" arrangement, was placed in a separate temporale section.' Görlach, *The Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary*.

protected space within the community.[99] In *SEL* entry in 'A' versions, the bearing of banners at the end of the Rogationtide procession puts the devil to flight and symbolizes Christ's victory over the devil (the dragon). MS C records that:

> Þanne me makeþ processions . wiþ baners arered
> Þat is as oure Lourdes ost . to make þe deuel aferd
> Þe baners þat me berþ biuore . bitokneþ victorie
> Þat oure Louerd is aboue . & ywonne haþ þe maistrie
> Þe dragon þat me bereþ bihinde . bitokneþ oure luþer fo
> Þe deuel þat is hibinde ibroȝt . & worþ euere mo
> So mote it bi him euere be[o] . ne be[o] he neuere aboue
> Nou swete Iesus it grante us . for is moder loue
> Þat we holde so þis procession . & þe vastinge wiþoute sunne
> Þat frut of eorþe come wel vorþ . to helpe of mankunne (ll. 41-50, p. 162).

The 'frut of eorþe' draws us back to the opening lines of the *Banna* ('Now blouweþ þe niwe frut [...] Þis nywe frut of wan ich speke . is oure Cristendom / Þat late was on eorþe ysouwe' l. 1-4, p. 1). This image, in the *Banna*, then transforms into the saints' bearing banners. It is not unreasonable, I think, to argue that the entry for Rogationtide, as it currently stands (although unfortunately no 'Z' version survives to help do so convincingly), was refined by our *Banna*-poet. The entry for Rogationtide describes how the Christian community bears banners as they perform Christ's triumph over the devil, before reminding the reader that this in order that the fruit of the earth can help mankind.

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[99] See Alstatt for a thorough description of the Rogationtide processions of Wilton Abbey. Especially note her observations that 'At Sarum and Barking, the procession then exited the church through the nave, bearing banners, the cross, candles, and finally, the relics of its saints. At Wilton, the procession may have borne the elaborate golden reliquary of St. Edith, which, according to Goscelin of St. Bertin, King Canute commissioned for her translation.43 As at Barking and Sarum, the English processional antiphon *Surgite sancti* invoked the saints whose relics were carried for blessing and protection'. Alison Altstatt, "The Rogationtide Processions of Wilton Abbey," *Yale Journal of Music & Religion* 2, no. 2 (September 24, 2016), p. 21.

The overarching message of the *Banna*, of an allegorical battle between Christ and his saints against the Devil performed with the symbols of contemporary battle, the banner, is here repeated in the description of Rogationtide, reminding readers of their defensive duty.

The entry for the Invention of the Cross also adopts the language of battle and banners, casting the emperor Constantine as a romantic hero who is the first to adopt Christ's banner. The entry describes Constantine as a 'noble emperor' who '[i]n bataille he was so muche' (ll. 1-2, p. 174). As he procedes toward battle, Constantine sees a vision of the cross ('As he touward bataile wende . he bihuld up anhey / Hym þoȝte þat a uair crois . up in heuene he sey,' ll. 209-10, p. 174). The emperor, with divine guidance, interprets his vision as a sign that he should carry Christ's Cross as a banner into battle:

> Þe emperor þis vnderstod . þei he heþene were
> A crois he let make sone . þat is men touore him bere
> In stude of is baner . to bataille he wende anon
> And þoru uertu of þe holi crois . he ouercom is fon
> And þe maistrie wan of al is lond (ll. 213-17, p. 174).

Bearing the Cross as banner successfully aids the hero of this entry in battle. The language has striking similaries to that which we have seen in the *Banna* and Rogationtide. Christ achieves mastery over the devil in Rogationtide, and here, Constantine achieves mastery over his enemies through the bearing of Christ's banner. A version of the Invention of the Cross thought to be close to 'Z' survives in L. This version lacks any of the detail found in the 'A' manuscripts. No mention of battles or banners are made, and the text begins 'Þe holie rode ifounde was : ase ich eov nouþe may telle. / Constantyn þe Aumperour : muche heþene folk gan aquelle' (l. 1-2, p. 1, Horstmann). It

is most likely, I contend, that the adaptions of the Invention entry in the ‘A’ versions were additions of the *Banna*-poet, who was attempting to guide the reader in their defensive reading practice. These edits not only glorified the cause of spiritual warfare over the secular, but encouraged the reader to consider their own battle against sin.

Holy Warriors/ Romantic Heroes

Saints traded their secular armor for spiritual armor in some of the earliest hagiographic accounts. Sulpicious Severus' account of St Martin of Tours dating to c. 397, one of the formative texts in the genre of hagiography, describes the moment St Martin declares his intention to renounce secular warfare: 'he said unto Caesar, "Until now I have served you as a soldier: permit me now to be a soldier for God."'[100] The *SEL* records the same moment, in the speech of St Martin, as such: 'Ich am Iesu Christes kniȝt . & so ich habbe ibeo longe / Non oþer armes bote his' (ll. 33-4, p. 484). Echoing the call of the *Banna*, and diverting from Sulpicious, St Martin speaks that he is a knight of Christ, and does not require the literal sword and shield of secular battle. A few lines later, Martin is described as, 'Vnarmed & his swerd adrawe’ (l. 41, p. 484) - with sword drawn, yet unarmed. The inherent contradition asks the reader to meditate on what it means that Martin is seemingly both brandishing a sword and unarmed. Damon argues that:

[100] Sulpicious Severus, *Life of St Martin of Tours,* in Mary-Ann Stouck, *Medieval Saints: A Reader*, Readings in Medieval Civilizations and Cultures ; 4 (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 1999), p. 141.

> [t]his may appear initially to be a total rejection of earthly weapons in line with the Sulpician model, matching Ælfric's accuracy of representation, but Martin is refusing the arms provided to him by his military superior, and with them the obligation of service, rather than rejecting the bearing of arms in itself [...] Martin carries into battle not a cross, as he promised to do in earlier versions, but a drawn sword.[101]

However, the sword Martin bears is not a literal sword at all. While the language of warfare and armory is literalized, his sword is Pauline – he readies for the forthcoming battle dressed in the armor of God.[102]

With this spiritual sword, Martin miraculously conquers in battle. Upon entering the battlefield, his opponents find themselves unable to lift their weapons as their hands are weighed down like stones: 'Þo þat he among hem com: þer nas of hem noȝt on: Þat miȝte more hebbe vp his hond: þan miȝte þe ded ston' (ll. 43-4, p. 484). Martin's victory is not one won by physical warfare, but one won by divine intervention. In many ways, this account is living up to the promises of spiritual arming. Martin is saved not through his physical weaponry (though he has a literal symbol of his faith), but with his spiritual armor represented by his drawn sword. Furthermore, Martin's trading of secular for spiritual arms makes him an obvious example of the *Banna*-poet's 'hardy kniȝtes' (l. 63, p. 3).

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[101] Damon writes of this moment that '[t]his may appear initially to be a total rejection of earthly weapons in line with the Sulpician model, matching Ælfric's accuracy of representation, but Martin is refusing the arms provided to him by his military superior, and with them the obligation of service, rather than rejecting the bearing of arms in itself.'John Edward Damon, *Soldier Saints and Holy Warriors : Warfare and Sanctity in the Literature of Early England* (Aldershot, Hampshire, England: Ashgate, 2003), p. 280.

[102] While I disagree with the conclusion Damon draws between Sulpicious and the *SEL*, that the 'differences between accounts of the same saint's lie written before the period of the Crusades and this one written during it reflect the new Christian approach to warfare and the sacred expressed in the Church's participation in holy war,' the point he raises is a good one. I do believe the author is responding to contemporary warfare and the impact of the Crusades. However, here the poet is not condoning the bearing of arms, rather stressing the significance of bearing *spiritual armor* in an individual battle for the soul. Ibid., pp. 281-2.

The entry for St Thomas Becket, which elaborates on the life of the most popular native saint of the later Middle Ages, is by far the longest entry of the *SEL* at 2444 lines. It is also accompanied by a 74-line translation legend. Largely considered an addition of the 'A-redactor' (our *Banna*-poet) this entry represents a significant addition. Not only this, but it centalizes the spiritual battle in a long-entry (too long for preaching), that acts as a conclusion to the whole text. Sharing notable stylistic similarities with the *Banna,* Becket is identified as a knight-hero fighting a righteous spiritual battle. Explicitly echoing the *Banna,* the St Thomas entry concludes the *SEL* collection in 11 major manuscripts (GVSUAJQPHDM). Even though does not take into account the final position of Judas and Pilate in Q, H and R, it still serves the *Banna*-poet's purposes. Liszka has argued these *vitae* were moved from the main body of the *sanctorale* into the final position by 'one redactor of some considerable literary sensibility [who...] solved the problems of theme and structure by creating a damned souls section at the end of the collection.'[103] Indeed, presenting Pilate and Judas as an appendix of sorts, allows the *Banna*-poet to present a main *sanctorale* section which lives up to the *Banna*'s objectives for the *sanctorale* and *temporale,* beginning and ending with banner-bearing saints fighting as *milites Christi.*

An 'A-redactor,' likely the *Banna*-poet, has wrapped the text (even if just the *sanctorale* portion) in explicitly defensive entries, beginning with the *Banna* and ending with Becket, with two entries that both promote the defensive capabilities of spiritual arming. The entry for Becket describes his spiritual armor as such:

A crois he nom inis hond . and wende forþ baldeliche

[103] Liszka, "The Dragon in the 'South English Legendary,'" p. 51.

Þe vestemens [were] is armure . as fel to suche kniȝt
Þe crois was is baner . for Holy Churche to fiȝte
Forþ wende þis gode kniȝt . among al is fon (ll. 959-961, p. 641).

Echoing the life of Martin, Becket's armor is simply his 'vestemens', and his banner is a cross, as he fights for the 'Holy Churche.' As a 'gode kniȝt' fighting against all his enemies, Becket is described in the same terms as a romantic hero. He loves well, as Lazikani has identified ('He 'louede' his deceased mother 'so mcuhel' (p. 113 [Horstmann])),'[104] but he also fights well, armed with the Pauline armor of God. Proceeding bravely into battle, Becket exemplifies the saint-made-hero image. In doing so, the *Banna*-poet aims to caution his readers away from the romance narratives of secular heroes, presenting them instead with a spiritually rewarding collection of hero-saints' lives.

At the moment of Becket's martyrdom, as the King's knights burst into the cloisters of Canterbury Cathedral, 'Sein Thomas bar þe crois an honde . and answerede is fon / Icham here he sede Godes preost' (ll. 2109-2114, p. 679). The image of Becket armed only with a cross in his hand is repeated a few lines later: 'Sein Thomas nom a crois an honde . and oþer arme non' (l. 2097, p. 679). The cross is already established as symbolizing Becket's military banner, and he then speaks out a declaration of faith, asserting his willingness to die 'For þe riȝte of Holy Churche' (l. 2114, p. 679). Juxtaposing images of the spiritual and secular warriors, the poet compares Becket, the 'gode kniȝt,' with the secular 'kniȝtes in grete wraþþe [...] Wiþ swerdes and wiþ axes .

[104] Lazikani, *Cultivating the Heart,* p. 53. Lazikani also notes that 'He sighs sorely throughout this text, with the repeated affirmation 'Seint thomas bi-gan to to sike sore' (p. 157 [Horstmann]) - an indication of his capacity to feel, and in turn an engagement of the audience's capacity to feel,' p. 53.

and wiþ oþer armes mo' (l. 2089-91, p. 678). Becket, armed only with a cross symbolizing the Pauline 'shield of faith' (Eph. 6:16), ultimately conquers over the 'swerdes' and 'axes' of the secular knights. Spiritual and literal arming becomes a central trope of this expansive martyrdom account, and bearing stylistic affiliations with the *Banna*-poet, the entry affirms the *Banna*'s assertion that 'Telle ichelle bi reuwe of ham [hardy knights]' (l. 66, p. 3).

When St Margaret gets swallowed by the devil in the form of a dragon, she makes the sign of the cross and puts the devil to flight: 'He[o] wende into a sori wombe . ac he[o] wolde lite abide / For the signe he[o] made of þe crois . þe deuel barst anon' (ll. 162-63, p. 297). For Margaret, like Becket, making the sign of the cross is as good as a literal sword – she is able to burst forth from the womb of the dragon. The concept of spiritual arming is increasingly associated with ritualized behaviours that transform the *arma Christi* into performative symbols of defense. At the same time as acting conquering hero, Margaret is the suffering victim whose pain we are meant to embrace. The tortures she endures are gut-wrenchingly graphic, and describe her flesh torn asunder and her bones revealed (for example, the entry reads: 'Bi peces þat fleiss fel adoun . þe bonnes were ysene / Alas hure swete tendre body . so villiche todrawe so,' ll. 122-23, p. 296). The entry, not unusually for the *SEL*, shows the embrace of a range of reading practices – in this case, affective and defensive. The reader is both meant to feel and revel in her immense pain, while adopting this heroic text as their own spiritual shield.

The call for readers to be like Christian soldiers is at the expense of the secular battle. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when tales of secular knights winning over the love of ladies through acts of chivalry and adventure were increasing in

popularity, the *Banna*-poet stress the spiritual battle over the secular one. Explicit in the fact that the secular battle is 'lesinge' (l. 62, p. 3), the reader is encouraged to divert their attention away from tales of secular warriors, to focus on the battles of the saints. The embrace of militaristic modes and genres in the *Banna* does more than just highlight the saints as *miles Christi*, it also presents them as heroes.

Indeed, the additions and manipulations of *Banna*-poet demonstrate an attempt to create in the *SEL* a substitute for popular romance narratives. The alternative battles and heroes are introduced in the line, 'Hardi batailles he may hure . here þat nis no lesinge' (l. 62, p. 3), the *Banna*-poet presents readers with alternative battles and heroes. The insistence on the correct reading of the text may remind us of the words of the fourteenth-century bibliophile Richard de Bury, who writes speaking in the voice of books, '[o]ur genuineness is every day detracted from, for new names of authors are imposed upon us by worthless compilers, translators, and transformers, being reproduced in multiplied regeneration; our ancient nobility is changed, and we become altogether degenerate.'[105] Without mention of genre (itself a modern construct), Richard de Bury lays out the obligation of compilers and copiers to treat their material as spiritually valuable. Aiming to create an entertaining and populist text, in which saints are explicitly made heroes, the 'A-redactor'/*Banna*-poet shapes the narratives of *SEL* legends to fit this goal. I agree with Liszka that the redactors of the *SEL*, were initially faced with a manuscript tradition in which the *temporale* existed as a separate unit before the *sanctorale,* and consequently, that the modern title of the *SEL* has resulted in the frequent neglect of the *temporale*

[105] Richard de Bury, *Philobiblon* (Berkeley: The Book Arts Club, University of California, 1933), p. 38.

narratives. Yet, I would also contend that the *Banna*-poet saw a singular *SEL* and was keenly invested in the hagiographic entries for their discussion of the saints as defenders and knights of Christendom and saw their lives as exempla for the right kind of defensive devotion.

It is noteworthy, then, that London, British Library, MS Cotton Caligula A II (Cx) contains two *SEL* entries alongside romance narratives. Dating from c. 1450, this manuscript consists mainly of romance narratives alongside the *SEL* entries for Juliana and Eustace. Görlach speculates that these two saints 'were probably *selected* because of their "romantic" character.'[106] While the *Banna*-poet would no doubt disapprove of the *SEL*'s hagiographic entries being copied within a collection of romances, this incorporation does attest to contemporary recognition of the status of the saints, even a virgin martyr, as romantic heroes. Out of the 60+ *SEL* manuscripts surviving, there is just one other manuscript that contains romance materials. The earliest *SEL* manuscript, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud Misc. 108 (L), is bound with two Middle English romances - King Horn and Havelok the Dane.[107] Added to the manuscript approximately 50 years after composition, however, there is little possibility the romances were part of the conceived program for the manuscript.

Thompson has observed of the *Banna* that '[e]ven in the moment of announcing its project of narrating true stories of saints according to the chronological order in which their feasts are observed, the *SEL* blurs the lines between hagiography and romance.'[108] In establishing the saints as 'hardy kniȝts' who are 'studeuast were in bataille,' the

[106] Görlach, *The Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary*, p. 118.
[107] This conjectural history is put forward by Görlach in Ibid., p. 89.
[108] Thompson, *Everyday Saints and the Art of Narrative in the South English Legendary*., p. 87.

Banna-poet is establishing spiritual heroes who can take the place of secular heroes in romance literature. Thompson goes on to remark of 'the prologue's metaphoric garb of romance' that 'Christ the king goes forward into battle with the help of John the Baptist, a "hardy kniȝt" who fights "fast" until his life is lost.'[109] In this way, the *SEL* can almost be seen to compensate the reader for the correct diversion of their intellectual faculties. In the very breath in which the *Banna*-poet implies his criticism for romance narratives of secular heroes, the entry also presents itself almost within that very genre: 'ȝif is kniȝtes of þe rerewarde . þe strengore [ne]couþe fiȝte / Of here louerd ensample i nome . & flecchi nolde hi noȝt' (ll. 54-5, p. 3).

Hagiography, with its fantastical adventures in which, for example, virgin martyrs profess their eternal love for Christ, share motifs and trends with that of romance. Görlach identifies this feature to comment on the audience such treatment of romances might imply, noting, '[i]t should, however, be noted that the absence of any reference to the liturgy and the scorn the "A" prologue pours on romances suggests a slightly different audience: the book, apart from other functions it is meant to serve, is offered as a pious substitute for the too worldly interests of people accustomed to listen to romances.'[110] Distancing himself from claims of a monastic audience,[111] Görlach suggests that the audience were those who 'listen to romances' – perhaps secular, aristocratic readers. While there were undoubtedly varied audiences for the many *SEL* witnesses, the presence of *SEL* material bound with romances (e.g. Cx and L), and the appearance of witnesses in

[109] Ibid., p. 87.
[110] Görlach, *The Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary*, p. 7.
[111] See, for example, Sobecki, "Exemplary Intentions Two English Dominican Hagiographers in the Thirteenth Century and the Preaching through Exempla."

lay hands (e.g. I and Cd), suggests this is true at least in part. There is something of the ironic in this –the kind of identification with a text that defensive reading involved was also necessary for literary enjoyment. The romances that the *Banna*-poet tried to protect his readers from, in the end, found themselves as part of those readers' collections.

Conclusions

The *SEL* that survives today is one heavily influenced by an individual I have called the *Banna*-poet. This individual was concerned and invested in promoting defensive reading as a means to arm onself against spiritual and emotional threats. The *Banna* itself is most explicit in demanding a defensive response - it is not simply a text that seeks to depict the saints as spiritual militants, but one that asks its readers to participate in a defensive reading practice. Readers find themselves implicated in a continuing history of Christendom – a Christendom beset by enemies who threaten the faith, health, and happiness of its inhabitants. The *Banna* posits the *SEL* as a means to conquer these enemeies.

Yet, as Liszka has pointed out, there were many incarnations of the *SEL*, and the entries were maleable to a range of users. Entries were extracted, reordered, and others were edited. *SEL* witnesses attest to a wide range of uses for the *SEL*. Strikingly, despite the repeated claims for preaching, few of them appear strictly homiletic in nature (Ry consists of homiletic material, and there is little in the way of codicological evidence for preaching). While I consider it likely the origins of the *SEL* lie in preaching material, the text was made popular through the A-redaction (of which the *Banna*-poet was one of the

redactors), and this version was meant to be *read*. Additions such as *Banna* and the entry for St Thomas Becket define the *SEL* as a *text* for reading. This agenda understood the saints as figures within a grand historical battle of good versus evil. By refining the allegory of Ephesians 6:10-20, the *Banna*-poet shows readers how to treat the *SEL* as a collection of lives that can, when read in an appropriate penitential and meditative way, build defensive armor.

CONCLUSION

The striking refrain of 'O Vernicle' to 'schilde me' and 'kepe me' echoes St Paul's instruction to the Ephesians to '[p]ut you on the armor of God [...] taking the shield of faith' (Eph. 6:11,16). In this dissertation, I have argued that medieval readers and redactors responded to Paul's call to spiritual arms through texts and their manuscript objects. While protective charms and blessings were commonplace in Anglo-Saxon England and beyond,[1] the period following 1250 was met with an increased urgency to don spiritual armor and defend faith through reading a wide range of devotional texts. Instructions within texts, codicological evidence, and illustrations all guided a practice of individual, and increasingly ritualized, defensive reading, which intersected with contemporaneous reading practices (including meditative, penitential, and affective reading).

The redactors and compilers examined in this dissertation share an interest in 'collecting' textual shields. *Vitae* in the *SEL* are promoted by the *Banna*-poet as exempla for defensive reading practice, and 'O Vernicle' translates the *arma Christi* into spiritual armor. 'O Vernicle' calls upon the *arma Christi,* the objects of Christ's Passion, to act as intercessors of divine protection. This reading is informed by the treatment of the *arma Christi* as relic and amulet. The *arma Christi,* for the most part, represent the most powerful contact relics of the medieval world – those of Christ's Passion. While they

[1] For further discussion, see Karen Louise Jolly, *Popular Religion in Late Saxon England: Elf Charms in Context* (Chapel Hill ; London: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

were considered to have physical form, their representations were a powerful access point to the divine.

For the ‘O Vernicle’ reader, the Pauline ‘shield of faith’ is won through the mental imagining of the *arma Christi* as personal armor. The ‘O Vernicle’ rolls particularly guide the reader towards this response through their narrow form, their combination of text and often compartmentalized image, and their textual cues. The reading and viewing of each stanza, builds the defensive resilience of the reader as they add armaments to their internal treasury. The unique form of many ‘O Vernicle’ witnesses allows the reader to identify amuletic potential in the presentation of the *arma Christi*. Previously this type of ritualistic interpretation has been restricted to obviously amuletic textual objects, such as birth girdles containing charms to be wrapped around the belly. While ‘O Vernicle’ remains devotional, the text and its manuscripts draw on this same amuletic tradition.

Several rolls (E, A3, B, C2), and all codices except A1, are copied alongside one or more partner text. The partner texts are varied, and attest to the place of ‘O Vernicle’ among a range of contemporary reading practices, which include, but are not limited to, the ritualistic (an indulgence to the *arma Christi*, DIMEV 5196), the affective (a meditation on the Passion, DIMEV 2915), and the penitential (a prayer of thanksgiving for the redemption, DIMEV 2290). The compilers of ‘O Vernicle’ establish the poem as an example of how ritualistic defense can be adopted in ‘orthodox’ reading practices.

From ‘O Vernicle,’ I find a connection with the *South English Legendary*, which also collects ‘compartmentalized’ textual entries for defense. In this case, such compartments are *vitae* or *temporale* entries, distinguished from each other in almost

every manuscript by colored, decorated, or large initials. In examining the textual tradition of this complicated text, one redactor stands out in the drive to make the *SEL* defensive. The so-called, '*Banna*-poet,' an early reader of the *SEL*, transformed the textual trajectory of the *SEL*. In identifying a purpose for this fluid collection of *sanctorale* and *temporale* entries, the *Banna*-poet brought together *sanctorale* and *temporale* items under the metaphors of God as gardener and saints as warriors. Entries were adapted by the *Banna*-poet to suit the allegorical purpose of spiritual arming, and the reader was encouraged to 'collect' them, using individual entries to inform a defensive, as well as a penitential and sometimes affective, reading. When the *Banna*-poet writes of the battle fought by Christ and his saints ('Þe bataille was strang inou . þat oure swete Louerd nom / And his deciples suþþe abrod . to hold up Cristendom'),[2] he imagines a world informed by its creation under siege. I argue that regardless of the *Banna's* placement, the *Banna*-poet considers it to sum up the schematic of the collection as a whole. The fact that the text quickly became adopted as a prologue in eight early manuscripts points to a wide reader reception in support of the A-redactor's goals. I also argue that other entries, particularly the life of St Thomas Becket, are additions of the *Banna*-poet and confirm a thematic interest in spiritual militarism and defense. The textual tradition of the *SEL* demonstrates that the *Banna*-poet was, overall, successful in the attempt to create in the *SEL* a text for defensive reading.

In this dissertation, textual transmission has informed my literary reading of 'O Vernicle' and the *SEL*. In my study of 'O Vernicle,' I have identified partner texts – devotional texts frequently copied alongside it – that together create a defensive

[2] D'Evelyn and Mill, *The South English Legendary*. p. 2.

devotional program, as well as codicological evidence for ritualized reading. I have, in the *SEL,* identified the influence of a poet who saw *vitae* as exemplifying saintly warriors. Beyond this, I have also considered the material and visual culture of post-Conquest England. 'O Vernicle' especially is informed by the aesthetic cultures of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Drawing upon the visual and textual significances of the *arma Christi*, as well their material contexts as contact relics of Christ's Passion, 'O Vernicle' replicated the form and function of relic and heraldic symbol. Both 'O Vernicle' and the *SEL* are used as textual and visual tools with which the reader can 'shield' and 'keep' themselves from threats. I have demonstrated that such defensive practice was a wide-spread cultural phenomenon between 1250-1500.

While people in the Middle Ages turned to the codex and the written work to lead their battle against the devil, today we defend the manuscript object in museums and libraries. Rather than using the book to protect the soul from the wiles of the devil, books themselves are now defended against the decay of time through conservation and digitization. Ironically, the processes which demonstrate early users' defensive reading of manuscripts (e.g. repeated touching for protective prayer) are now the cause for our present-day concern for protecting the manuscript. Much of this dissertation has considered how texts are compartmentalized for the purpose of spiritual arming – how a stanza or a *vita* can build up spiritual armor. With this in mind, it is worth considering the dangers and advantages of present day digital projects to fragment our research. Many medieval manuscripts are now cut up and scattered across countries and continents – manuscripts were especially victims to destruction in the sixteenth century as binding material and the nineteenth and twentieth centuries for profiteering. With the

advancement of online catalogues and search tools, current efforts are focused on describing and reconstructing manuscript fragments. Projects such as *ManuscriptLink* and *Lost Manuscripts*, which aim to reconstruct whole books from scattered leaves, and *Fragmentarium*, which aims to provide a platform for a professionally crowd-sourced international fragment catalogue, deal with how to defend and rescue manuscripts from historic and modern threats.[3] The reassembling of pieces of medieval manuscripts returns to the interpretative question of how a textual object is representative of wider cultural tendencies. Present day motivations aim to protect and stabilize textual objects, and to digitize as much of them as possible. By doing so, and by creating search facets that describe manuscripts by date, script, origin, etc., we risk isolating digital projects to the field of bibliographers only. As a field, we must consider how to address research questions across fields and disciplines.

Defensive reading in the later Middle Ages is a cultural practice as wide-spread as affective, performative, or penitential reading, and deserves equivalent attention in scholarship. This dissertation has addressed how defensive reading is shown through the textual and redactionary history of two texts – 'O Vernicle' and the *SEL*. Both are vernacular and written in verse, yet these texts are nonetheless very different – one a vast, unstable compendium of *temporale* and *sanctorale* material (the *SEL*), the other a relatively stable lyric of twenty-four short stanzas ('O Vernicle'). They share, however, evidence of a distinct defensive reading practice. In short, they allow their readers to 'put [...] on the armor of God [...] to stand against the deceits of the devil' (Eph. 6:11).

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[3] See, *Lost Manuscripts* at http://www.lostmss.org.uk/; *ManuscriptLink* at http://lichen.csd.sc.edu/manuscriptlink/; and *Fragmentarium* at http://fragmentarium.ms/.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Sigla and dates of all extant 'O Vernicle' witnesses

Sigla	**MS**	**Date**
E	Philadelphia, Redemptorist Archives of the Baltimore Province *olim* Esopus, New York	c. 1400
Hd	Cambridge MA, Houghton Library, MS Typ 193, fols. 183-89	1475-1500
Ii	Cambridge, CUL, MS Ii.6.43	c. 1425
R	London, BL, MS Royal 17 A XXVII	1400-1420
A1	London, BL, Add. MS 11748	Part 1: 1400-1425 Part 2: 1470-1500
A3	London, BL, Add. MS 32006	1450-1500
B	Edinburgh, Catholic Scottish Archives, GB 0240 CB/57/9 *olim*, National Library of Scotland, Dep. 211/9, *olim*. Blairs Museum 9	c. 1400
C1	Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley Rolls 16	c. 1490
C2	Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Add. E. 4	c. 1450

M	New York City, The Morgan Library, MS Morgan B.54	c. 1450
P	Cambridge, Magdalene College, MS Pepys 2125	c. 1400
Q	Oxford, Queen's College, MS 207	1470-1500
H1	San Marino, Huntington Library, MS HM 142	c. 1440
L	Warminster, Longleat House, Marquess of Bath, MS Longleat 30	c. 1450
A2	London, BL, Add. MS 22029	1420-30
H2	San Marino, Huntington Library, MS HM 26054	c. 1450
O	New Haven, Beinecke Library, MS Osborn fa 24	c. 1450
S	Clitheroe, Stonyhurst College, MS 64	c. 1450
D	Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 1	c. 1460
T	Princeton, Princeton University Library, MS Taylor 17	c. 1500

Appendix 2: Sigla and dates of SEL manuscripts, mostly taken from Görlach's Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary with personal additions and edits.

Sigla	**Shelfmark**	**Date**
Major Manuscripts		
A	Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 43	1300-1330

B	Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 779	c. 1450
C	Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 145	Scribe 1: 1310-1320 Scribe 2: c. 1450
D	Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud Misc. 463	c. 1400
E	London, BL, MS Egerton 1993	1325-50
F	Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS McClean 128	1400-1425
G	London, Lambeth Palace, MS 223	1400-1425
H	London, BL, MS Harley 2277	c. 1300
I	Cambridge, St John's College, MS 28	c. 1400
J	London, BL, MS Cotton Julius D IX	1400-1425
K	Cambridge, King's College MS 13	14th century
L	Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc 108	c. 1300
M	London, BL, MS Egerton 2810	1350-1375
N	London, BL, MS Egerton 2891	c. 1310-1320
O	Oxford, Trinity College, MS Trinity College 57	c. 1380-1400
P	Cambridge, Magdalene College, MS Pepys 2344	1350-1375
Q, Qa, Ba	London, BL, MS Add. 10301; London, BL, MS Add. 10626; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Add. C. 220	c. 1400
R	Cambridge, Trinity College MS 605	c. 1400
S	London, BL, MS Stowe 949	1375-1400
T	Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Tanner 17	c. 1400

U	Cambridge, CUL, MS Add. 3039	c. 1450
V	Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Poetry a.1 (Vernon MS)	c. 1390
W	Winchester, Winchester College, MS 33A	c. 1450
X	Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 431	14th century
Y	Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Add. C. 38	1400-1425
Fragments		
Ar	London, BL, MS Arundel 42	14th century
Ba	Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Add. C 200	See Q
Bd	Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Poet. D. 200	14th century (hp added 15th century)
Be	Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Poet. E. 94	c. 1400
Bp	Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Poet. C. 3	1400-1450
Br	Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson poet. 225	1450-1500
Cd	London, BL, MS Cotton Cleopatra D IX	c. 1350
Gr	London, Gray's Inn, MS 20	14th century
Ki	Kilkenny, Ireland, MS Kilkenny, Liber Primus	c. 1350 (Latin documents relating to affairs of the Borough of Kilkenny date the fragment)
Lm	Leicester, MS Leicester Museum, 18 D 59	c. 1310-1320

Pr Wm	London, Public Records Office C. 47/34/1, no.5; Wisbech, MS Wisbech Town Library Museum no. 21	1350-1400
Rm	Ripon, MS Ripon Minster Fragment 33	c. 1500
Qb	London, British Musuem, MS Add. 24078	1350-1400
Ua Wa	Cambridge, CUL, MS Add. 2585 (3); Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, MS 5043	c. 1400
Ub	Cambridge, CUL, MS Add. 4544	1300-1400
Wh	Nottingham, Nottingham University, MS Mi Lm 7/1	c. 1310-1320
Selections		
Ax	London, College of Arms, MS Arundel 127	c. 1500
Az	Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates 23.7.11	Fragments from 7 or 8 manuscripts dating from the 14th and 15th centuries
Cx	London, British Library, MS Cotton Caligula A II	c. 1450
Dy	Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 75	15th century
Hx	London, British Library, MS Harley 2250	1450-1500 (colophon gives date of 1477, but current volume disarranged)
Hy	London, British Library, MS Harley 4012	c. 1500
Hz	San Marino, Huntington Library, MS HM 64	15th century

Ly	Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud. Misc. 685	1450-1500
Lz	Leeds, MS Brotherton Library 501	c. 1450
Mz	Minneapolis, MS University of Minnesota, Z. 822. N. 81	1400-1450
Ox	Oxford, MS Corpus Christi College 237	1450-1500
Qx	London, British Library, MS Add. 22283 ('Simeon MS')	Late 14th century
Qy	London, British Library, MS Add. 24542	14th century (?)
Qz	London, British Library, MS Add. 36983	c. 1450
Ry	London, British Library, MS Royal 17 C. XVII	1400-1450
Tx	London, British Library, MS Cotton Titus A XXVI	c .1500
Uy	Cambridge, CUL MS Ee. 2. 15	1475-1500
Uz	Cambridge, CUL Ff. 5. 48	c. 1450

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